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Previously:
The one-armed swordsman Fujiki Gennosuke and the blind swordsman Irako Seigen are tied by a strong bond. They have been challenged to an imperial tournament using real swords, which will settle their fates. As the day of the tournament draws ever closer, their spirits run high…

This is a work of fiction. There is no relation to any real individuals or associations.



CHAPTER 72
MAKIWARA



虎眼流指南

*Kogan Dojo

WHEN DUELING IN A TOURNAMENT HELD IN THE PRESENCE OF NOBLEMEN,

YOU MUST NEVER THINK ON VICTORY OR DEFEAT.

IF YOU HIT AN OPPONENT SQUARELY WITH A WOODEN SWORD,

HIS VITAL JUICES WILL SEEP OUT.

THIS SORT OF OUTCOME,

WILL SURELY DISPLEASE THE LORD.

YOU MUST NOT LEAP FORWARD WITH BRUTE FORCE,

BUT MERELY WAIT CALMLY FOR THE PRECISE MOMENT.

THERE-AFTER,

THE REFEREE WILL TELL YOU WHEN TO STOP ...

THE TONGUE IS MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD.

HOW I LONG FOR THE AGE OF WARFARE!

SO THAT IT PLEASES THE LORD, IF YOU LET YOUR SWORD SPEAK FOR YOU,

THAT WILL OPEN THE PATH TO YOUR CAREER.

IN THE DAYS OF HIS YOUTH, THIS WAS THE INSTRUCTION GENNOSUKE HAD FROM HIS TEACHER,

ON THE DEPORTMENT OF A WARRIOR AT A TOURNAMENT IN PEACETIME.

THAT EVEN THE DEMON KOGAN WAS CONSTRAINED BY THE SOCIAL HIERARCHY,

WAS PROOF THAT ONE COULD NOT IGNORE SOCIAL CONVENTIONS.

SUNPU.

THE SASAHARA ESTATE.

THE MAN WHO CALLED AT THE SASAHARA ESTATE IN MID-APRIL,

WAS THE SECRET MESSENGER NUMAZU HIKOJIROU.

I REQUEST AN AUDIENCE WITH FUJIKI GENNOSUKE-DONO.

I HAVE COME TO IMPART INFORMATION ABOUT THE IMPERIAL TOURNAMENT.

IT IS TO BE EXPECTED THAT THOSE WHO ARE OF THE RANK OF SAMURAI DEDICATE THEMSELVES TO THE MARTIAL ARTS.

A SAMURAI MUST AT ALL TIMES BE PREPARED TO FACE DEATH.

HOWEVER, IN THESE TIMES OF PEACE, AS THE WAY OF THE WARRIOR HAS LAPSED...

IT WAS A LONG, FORMAL LETTER.

THERE WERE PERHAPS FEW WHO COMPREHENDED THIS UPON A SINGLE HEARING.

WITHIN THIS LONG DISCOURSE,

WAS THE INJUNCTION,

THAT THE TOURNAMENT WOULD BE CONDUCTED WITH REAL SWORDS.

I DO.

Do you understand?

This is no ordinary tournament...

No, Fujiki-dono

HEARD OF THE PROPOSAL TO USE REAL SWORDS.

IRAKO SEIGEN

FROM OKAKURA BOKUSAI

YOU SHOULD BE GIVEN THIS INFORMATION..

FORE-WARNED IS FORE-ARMED.

HOW UNFOR-TUNATE ...

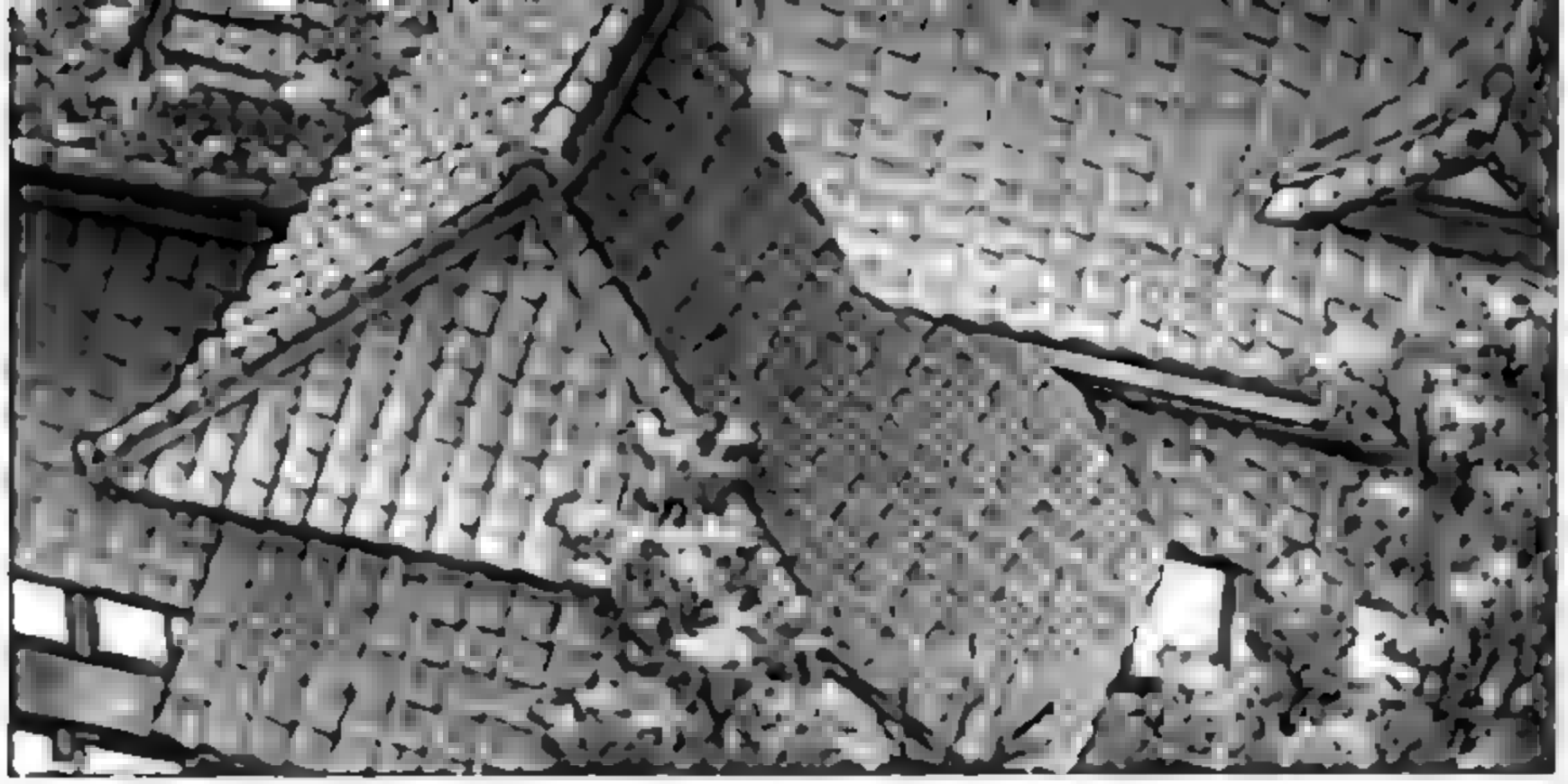
THE ILLUSTRIOUS GROUNDS OF SUNPU,

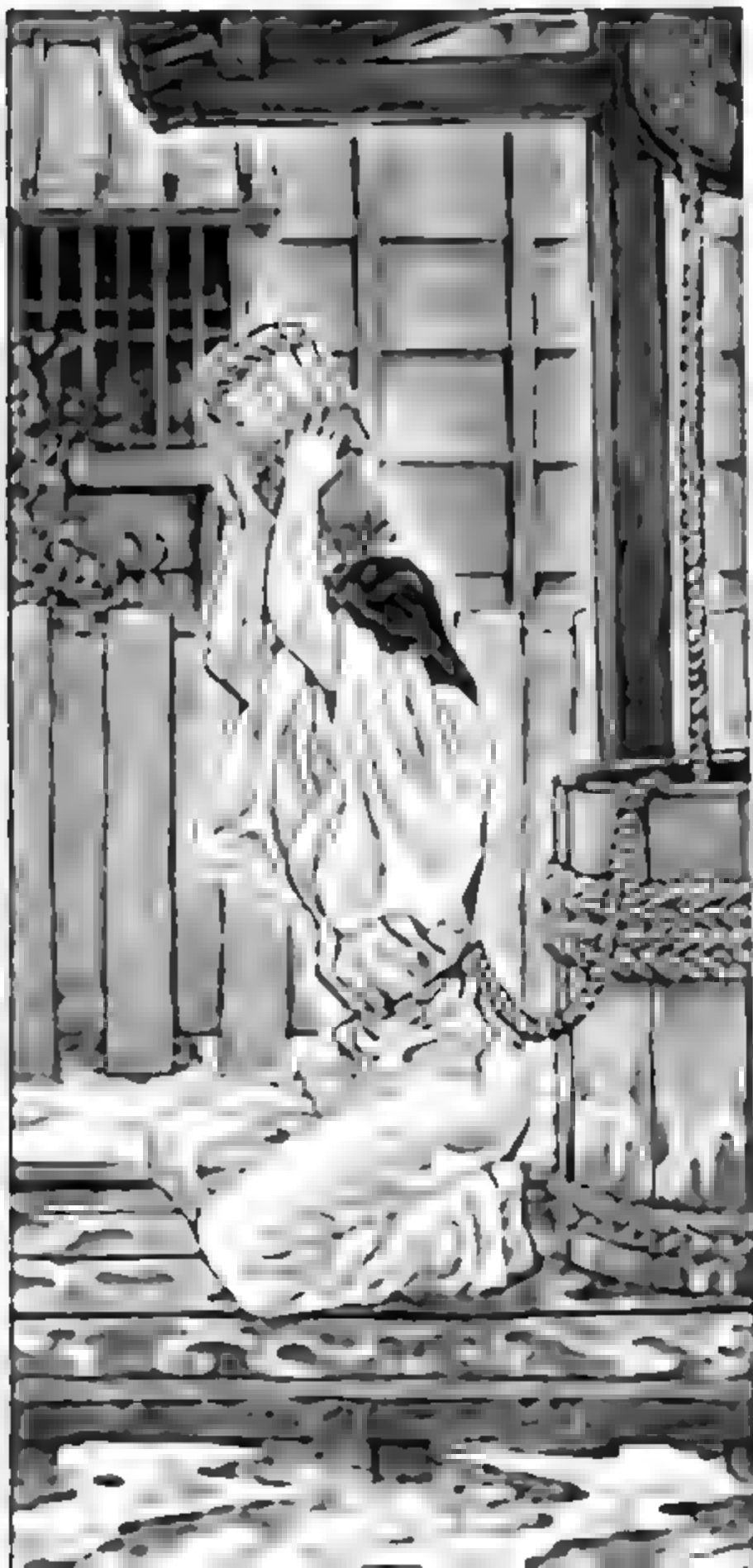
SHALL BE SULLIED WITH THE BLOOD OF THE TIGER.











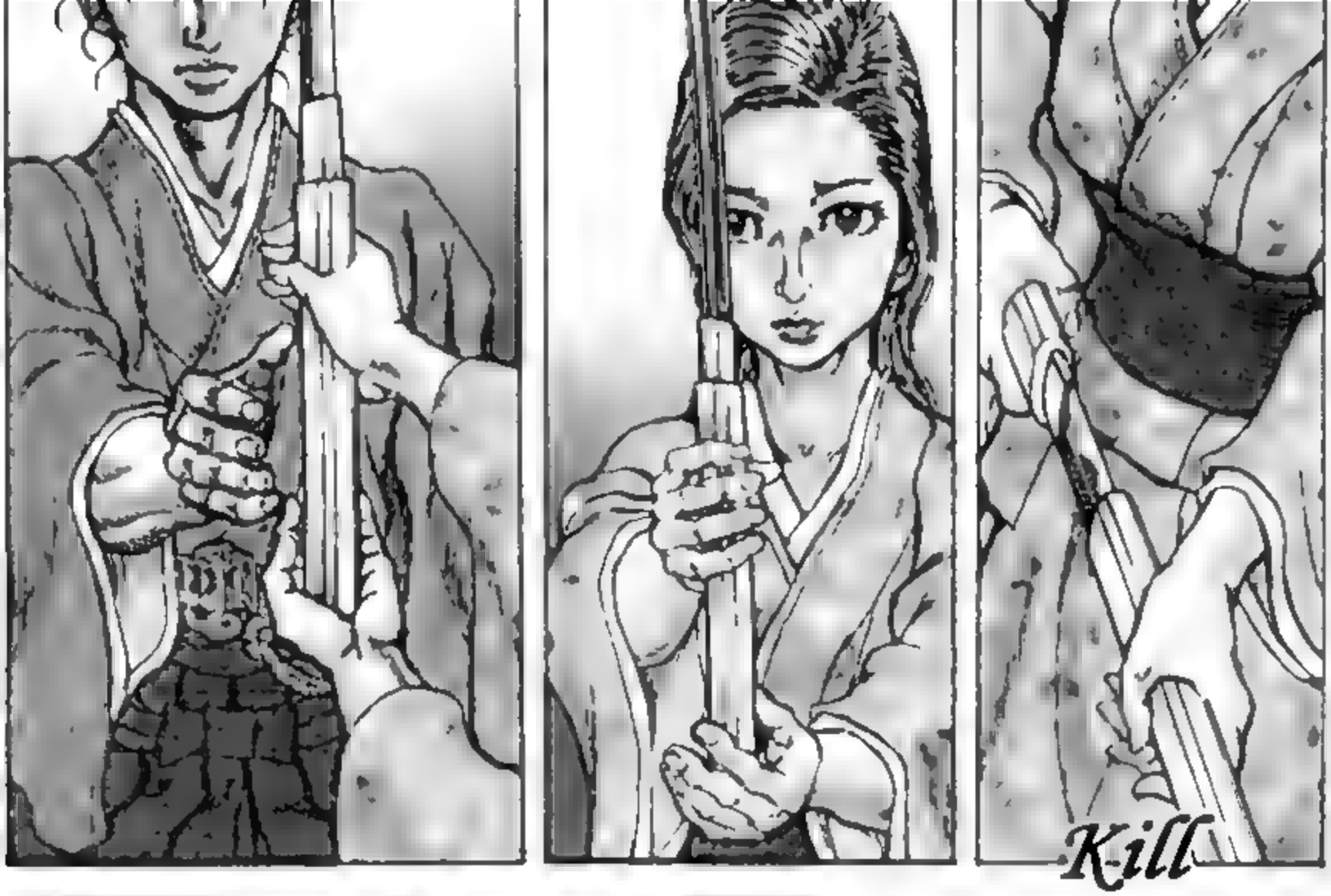


Take the demon.

Control the demon.

IT WAS THE MAIDEN WHO DECIDED,

THAT HE WOULD USE IN THE IMPERIAL TOURNAMENT THE CURSED SWORD THAT HAD BEEN ENTRUSTED TO THEM.


Kill
him,
Please.

SE:GEN WAS VISITED.

BY AN UNUSUAL CALLER

I COME BEARING THE PROMISED GOODS.

IT WAS KANAOKA UNRYUU-SAI,

OF THE EDO BRANCH OF KOGAN-RYUU

It is a sword fit for a lord

It is a nodachi* with a blade approximately three feet three inches in length and a curvature of forty degrees

*Unusually long sword

ITS NAME?

Osafune Mitsutada of Bizen inscribed it with the name Ichinoji.*

*The kanji for the number one (ichi), a single horizontal line

A GOD THAT ATTAINS ONENESS BECOMES A SPIRIT. A KING THAT ATTAINS ONENESS BECOMES AN EXAMPLE FOR TEN THOUSAND MEN.

THE SKY THAT ATTAINS ONENESS IS CLEAR. THE WORLD THAT ATTAINS ONENESS IS AT PEACE.

Ichi_

A SWORD UNRIVALED UNDER HEAVEN ...

AND THEN,,

THE BLIND SALESMAN

BREATHED IN THE SCENT OF THE PALE FACE

AN EXQUISITE EXHILARA-TION,

OHH ...

PENE-TRATED HIS ENTIRE BODY.


SEIGEN'S FLESH TREMBLED,
AND THE SENSATION OF LEAPING UP TOWARDS THE FIR-MAMENT.
WITH A SUDDEN SURGE OF BLOOD,

SEIGEN'S AMBITION,,

AT LAST TOOK WINGS.

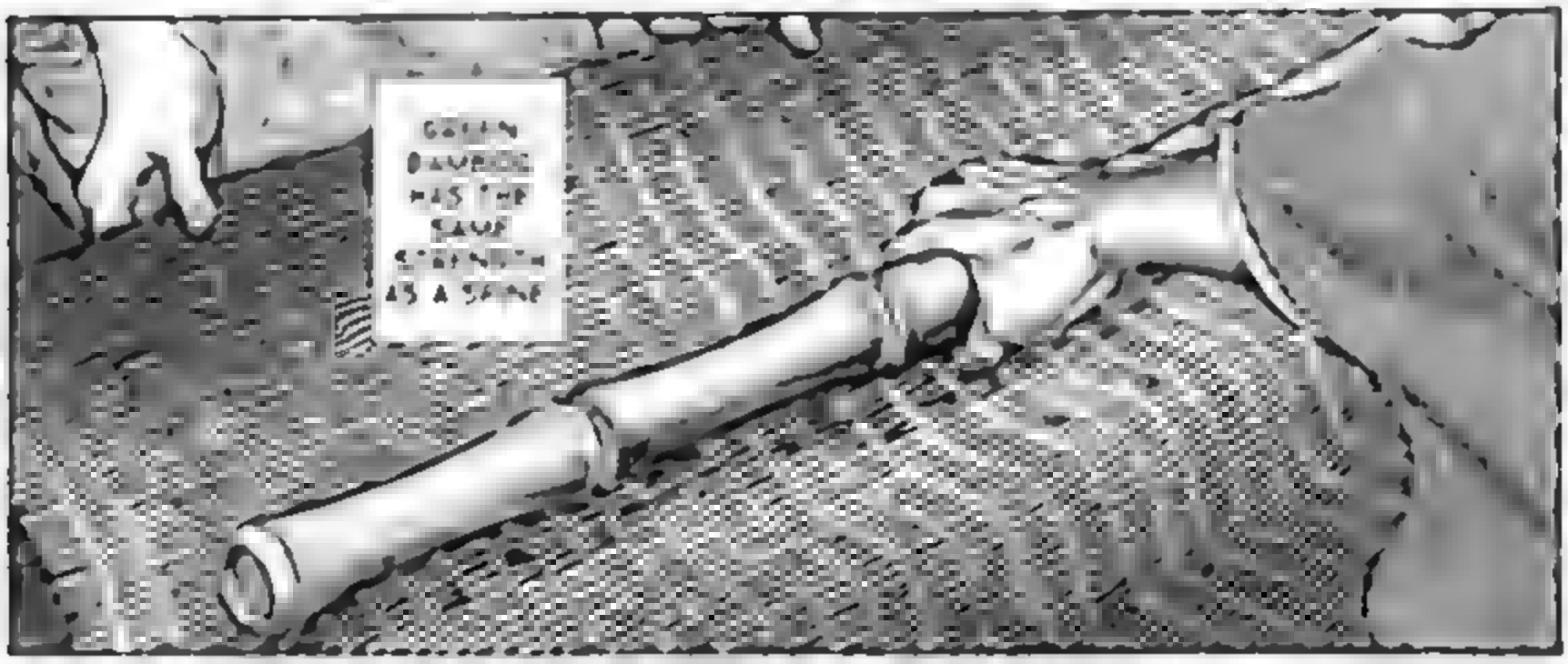
DARKENED TATAMI MATS LAY IN HEAPS, BUT,

I AM MUCH OBLIGED.

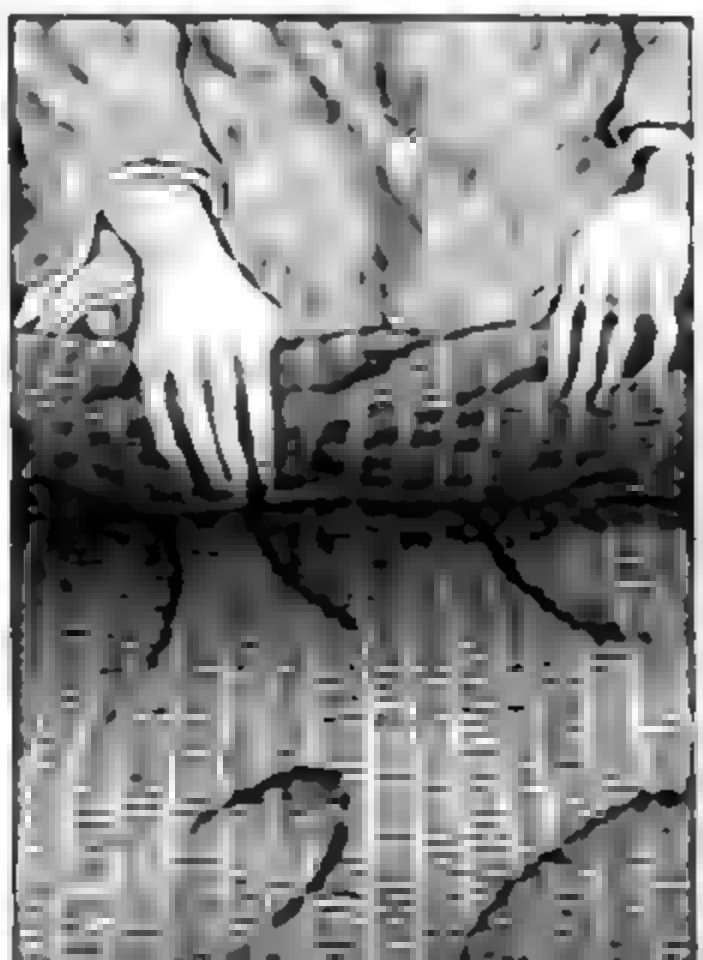
THEY ARE NOT IN USE DO WHAT YOU LIKE



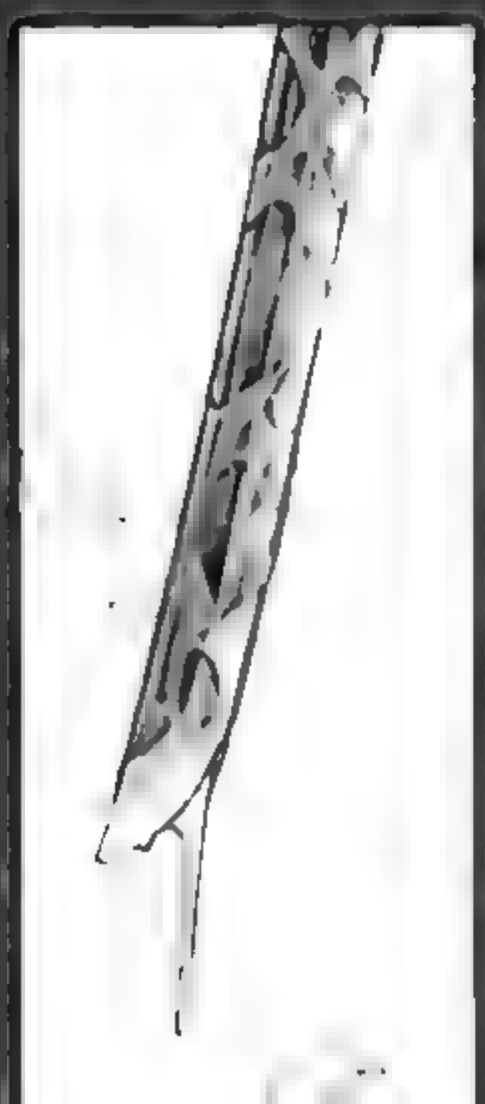



GOLIATH
BACTERIUM
WAS THE
SAME
SIZE
AS A SPERM

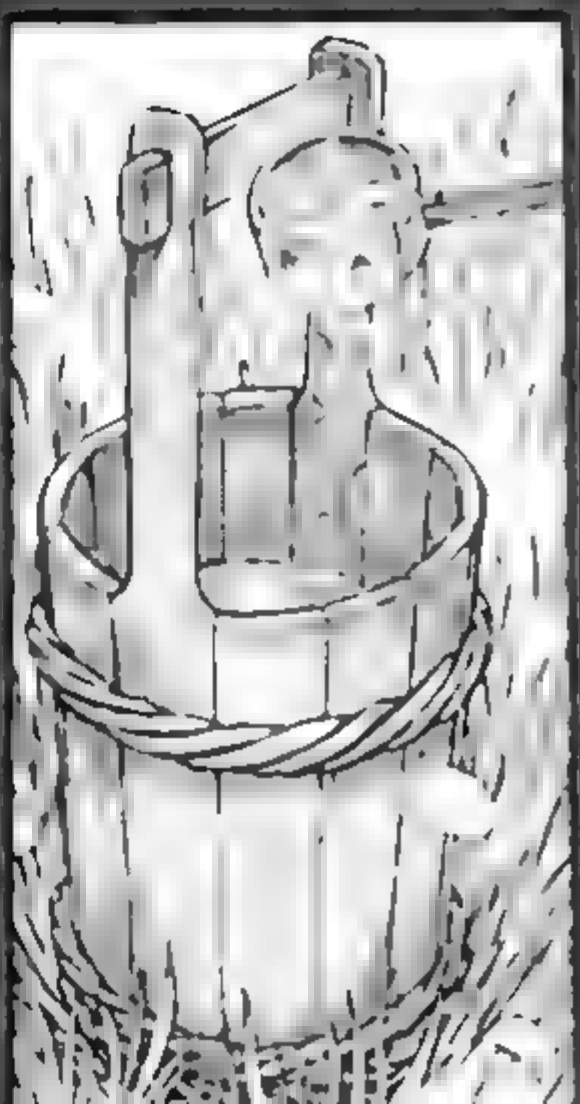

WHEN
IT IS
ACTIVE
IN
MAN
IT
HOLDS
A PILLAR
SHAPED
LIKE A
HUMAN
BODY
FALLED
A MAN
MAN

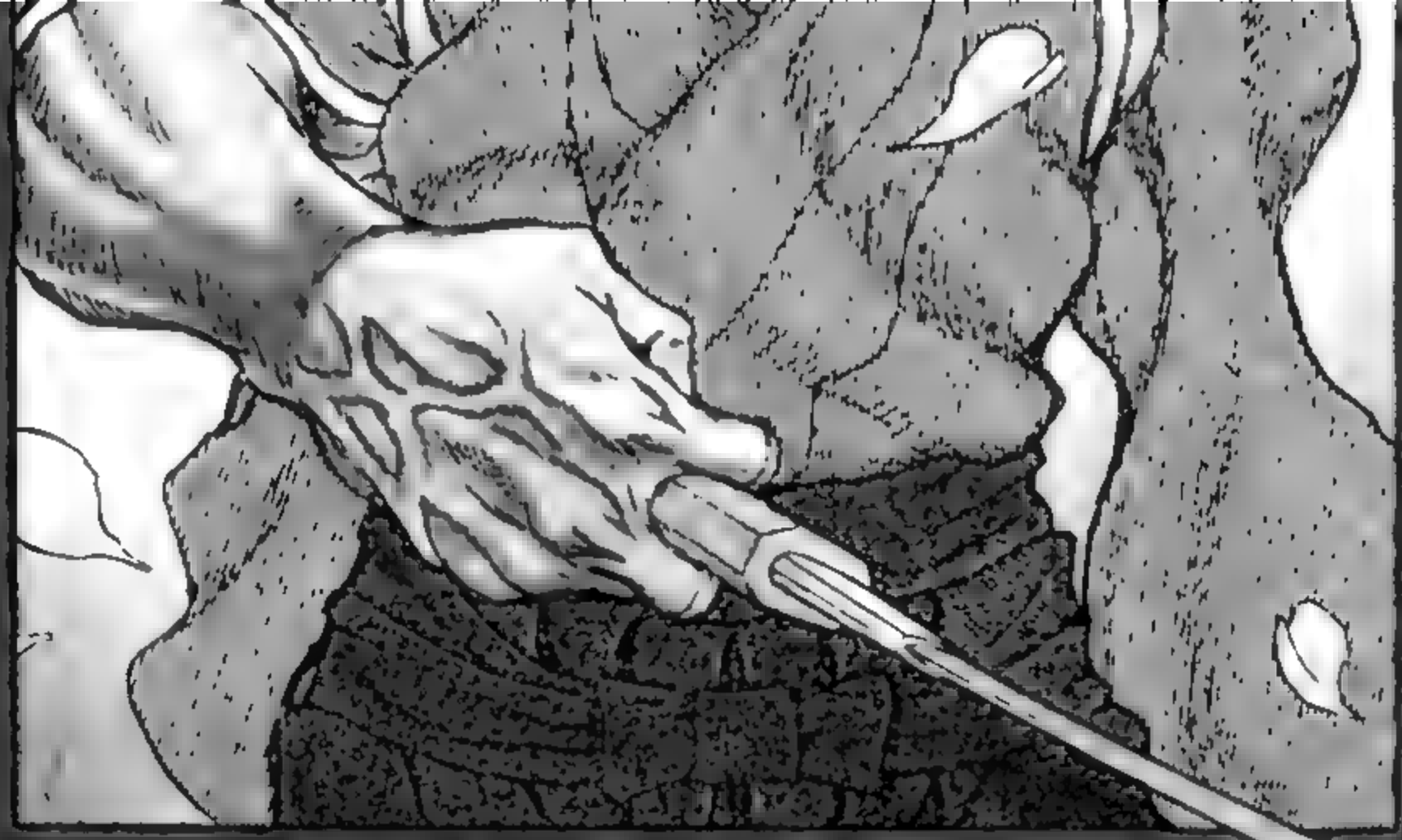






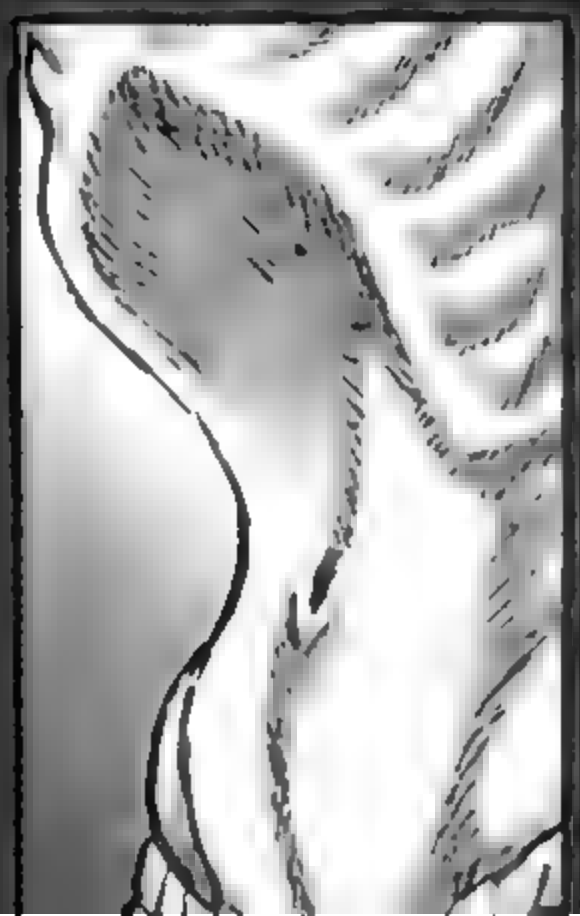


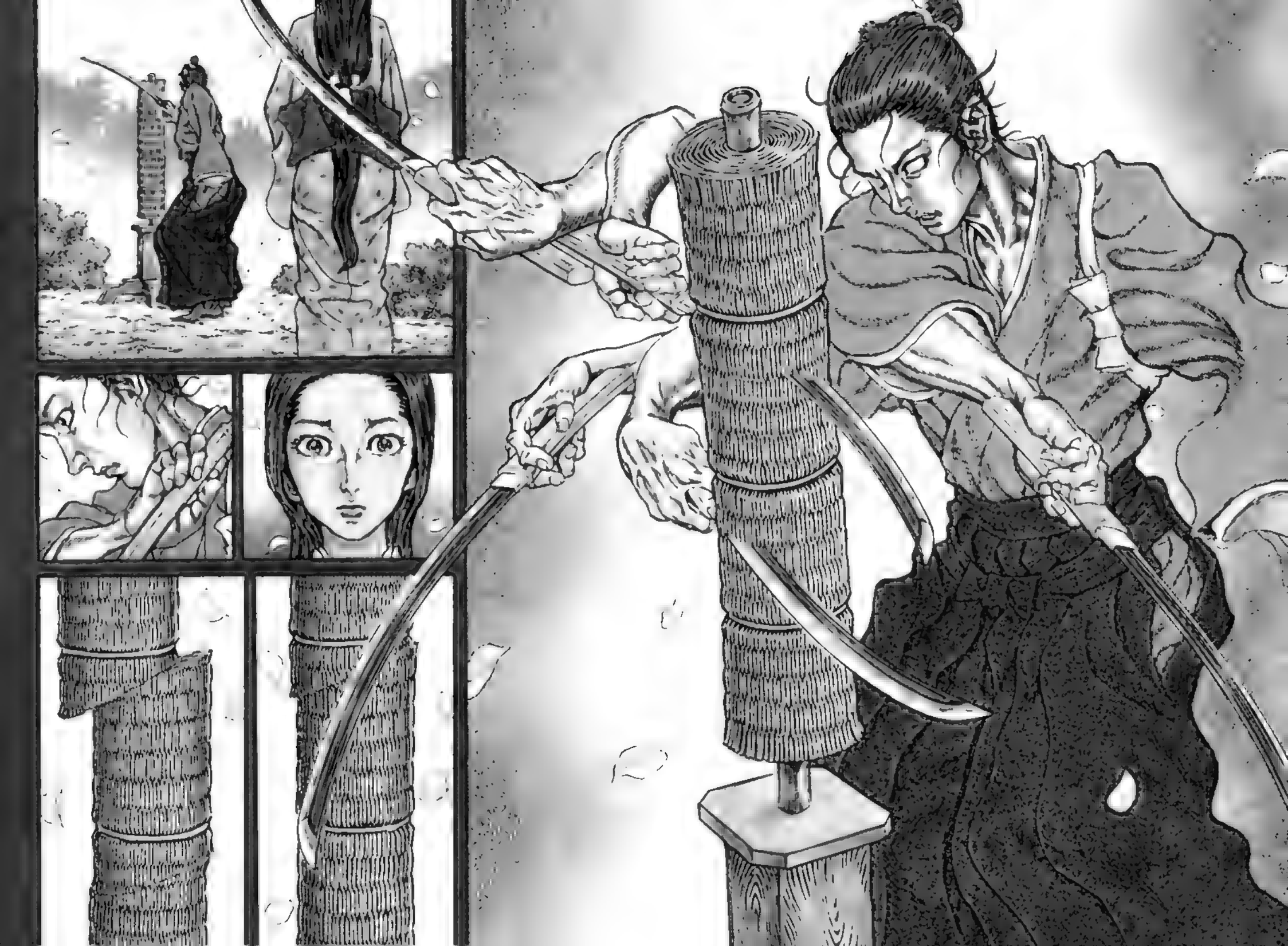




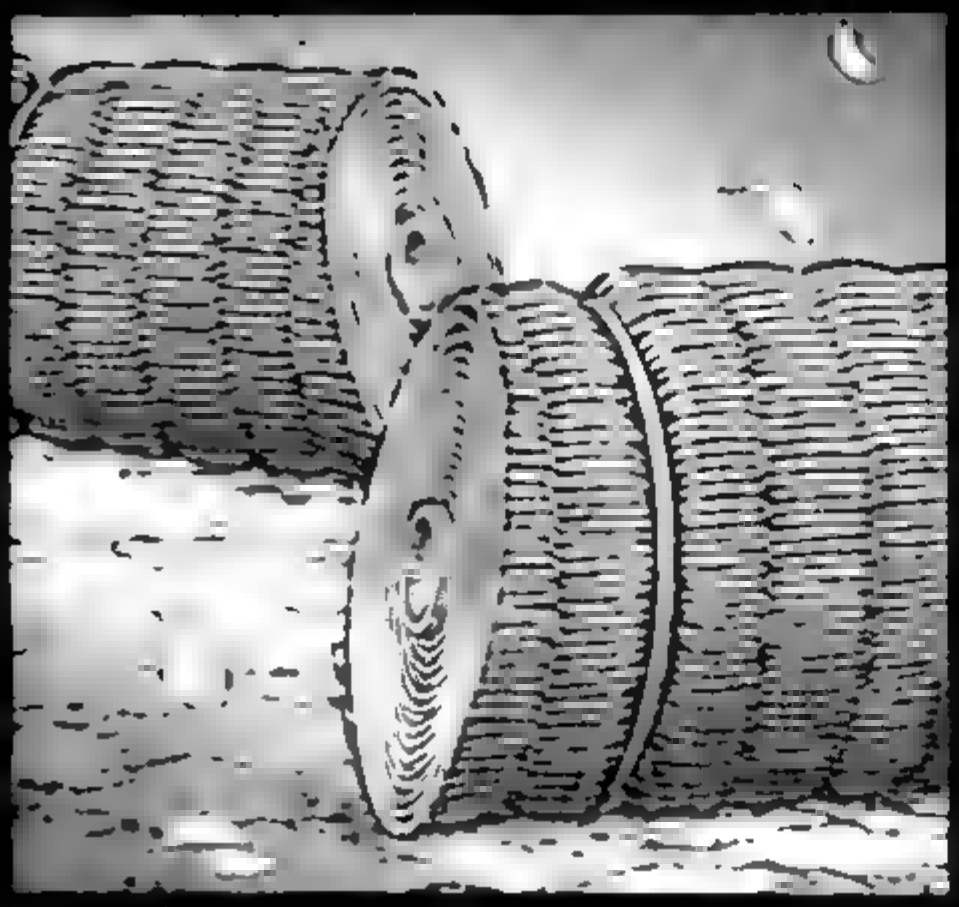






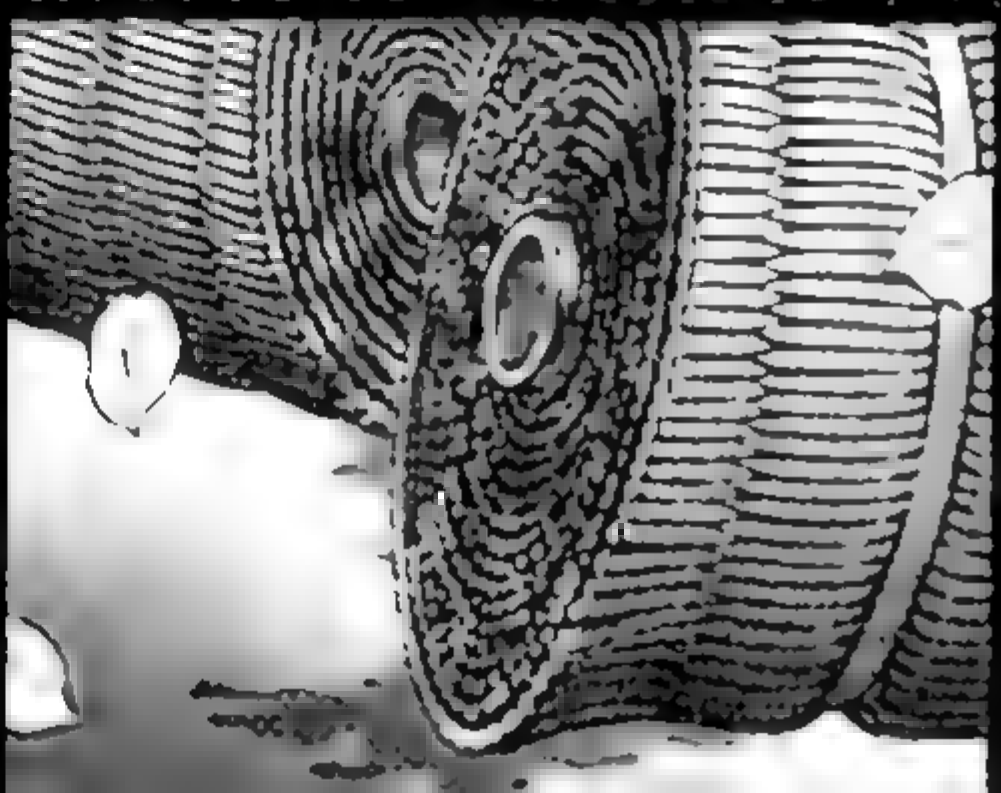




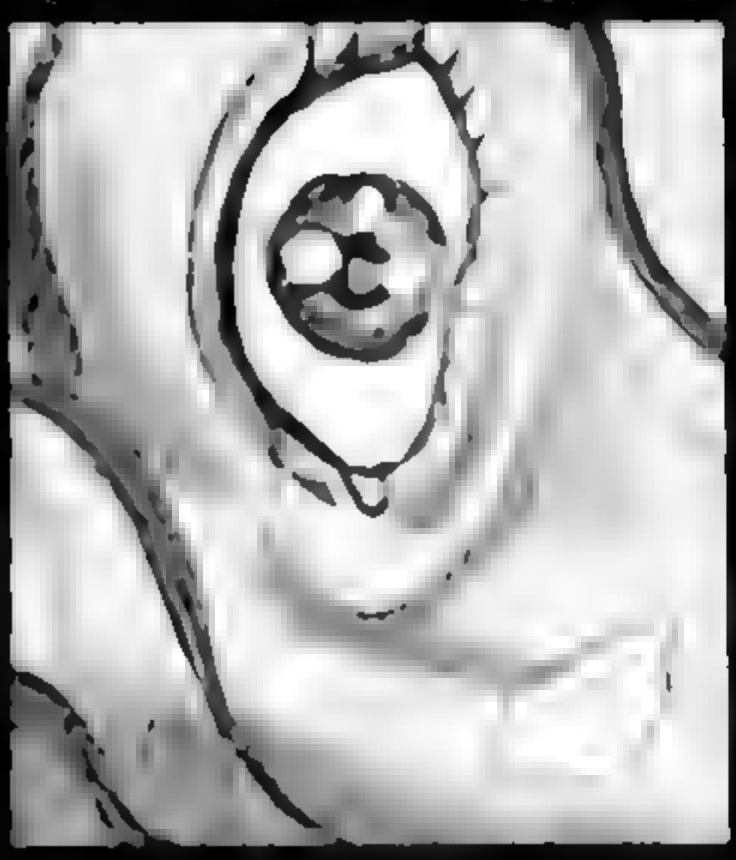


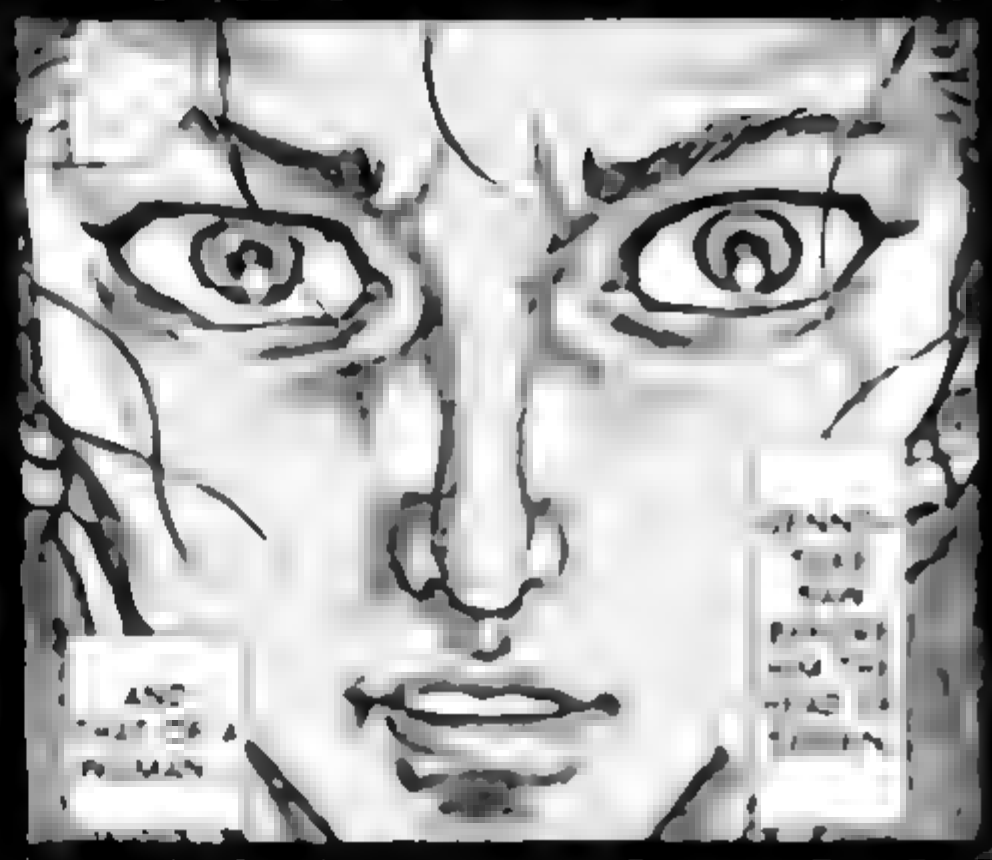











AND
THAT'S A
HUMAN










FUJIKI-
SAMA!





CHAPTER 73
AVATAR





















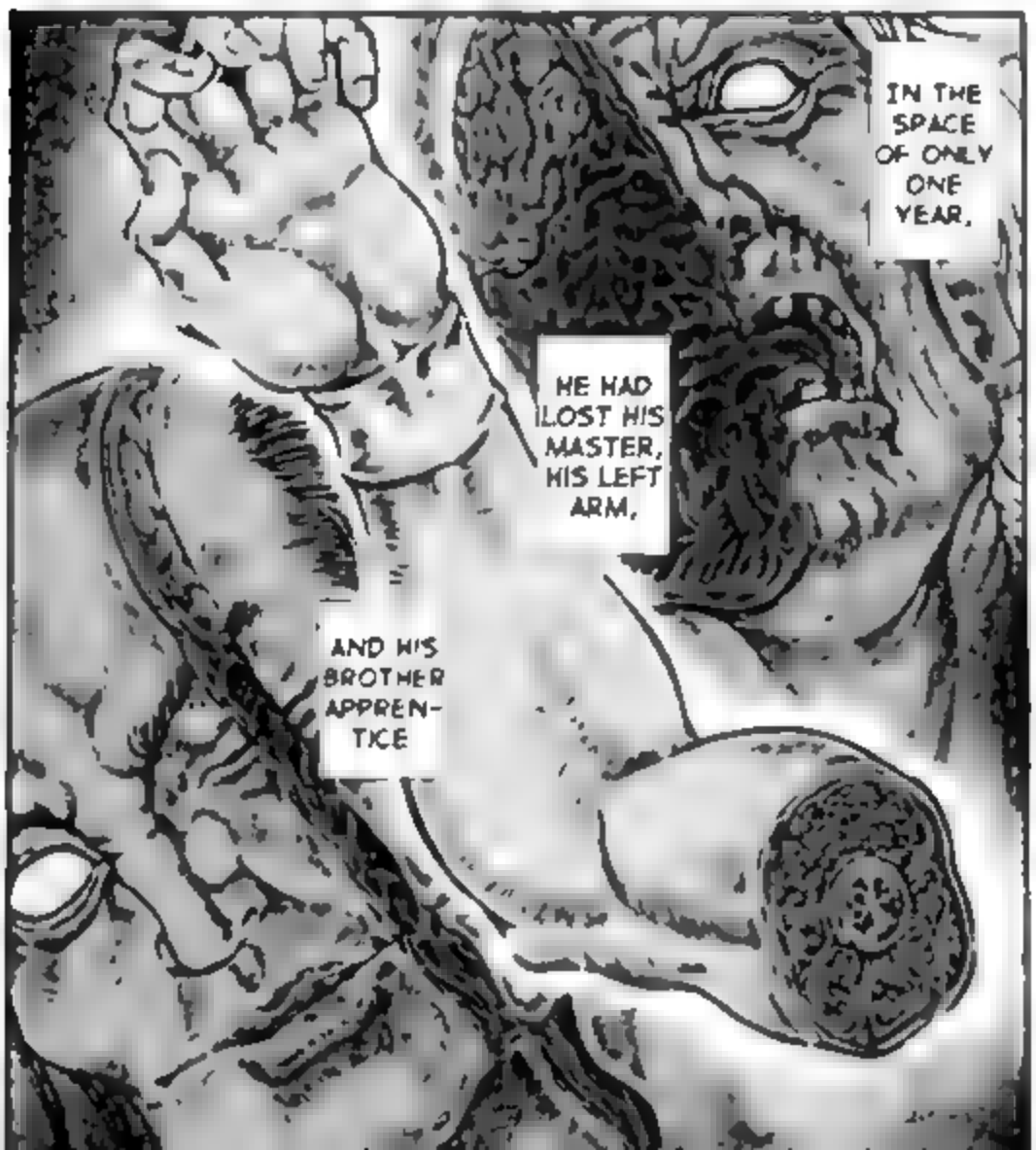

HOW IS FUJIKI GENNO-SUKE'S CONDI-TION?








EVEN THOUGH THE MOUTH OF THE WOUND IS CLOSED,
CANNOT BE EXPECTED TO LIVE LONG.
ONE WHO HAS SUFFERED SO SEVERE AN INJURY AS LOSING AN ARM


IN THE SPACE OF ONLY ONE YEAR,
HE HAD LOST HIS MASTER, HIS LEFT ARM,
AND HIS BROTHER APPREN-TICE

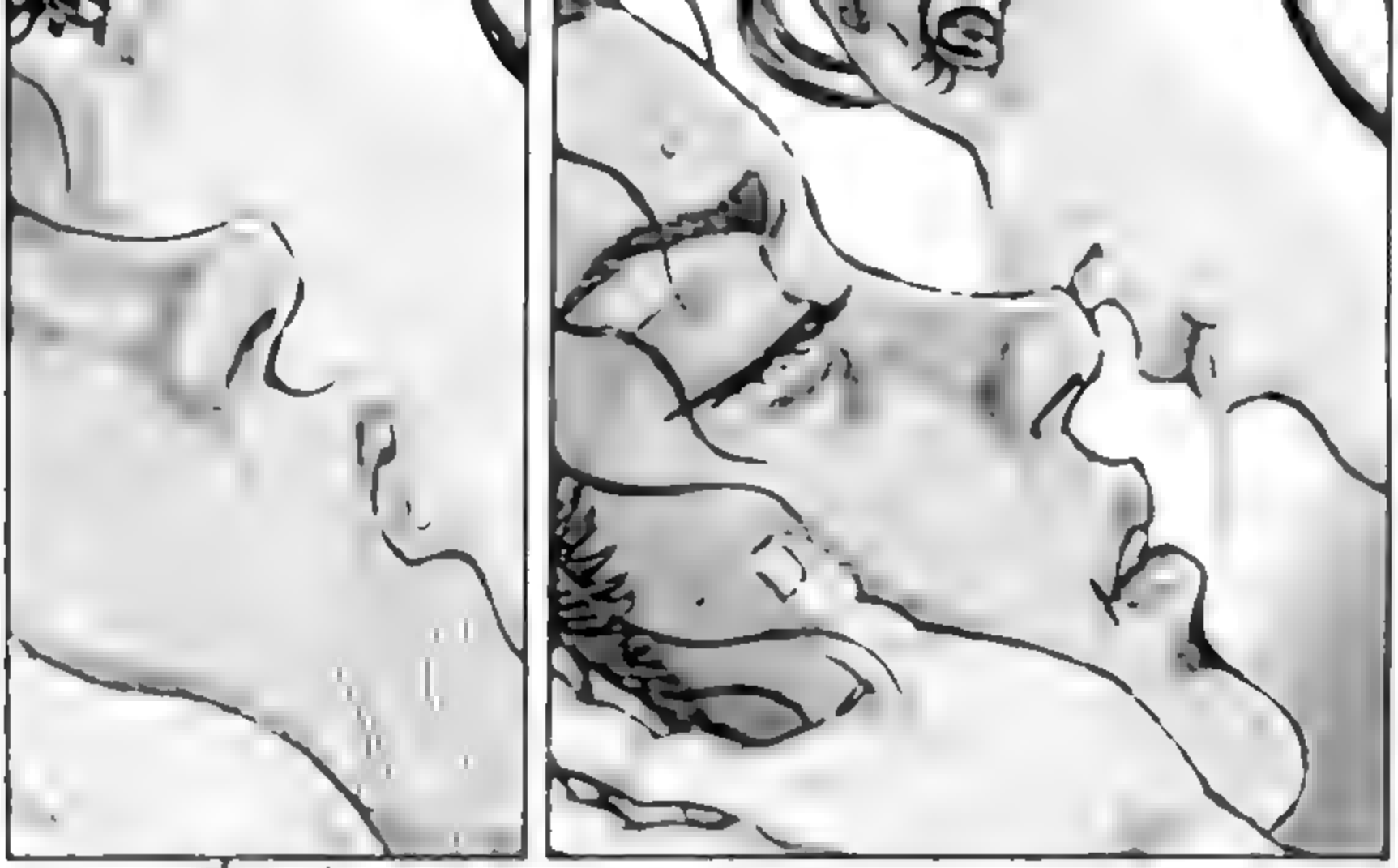

GENNO-SUKE HAD FALLEN INTO A COMA.

WERE BEING PUSHED BEYOND THEIR LIMITS,

TO EXHAUSTION

ALTHOUGH HE CONTINUED TO FIGHT,

THE TIGER'S FLESH AND HIS SPIRIT,


Please
kill
him.

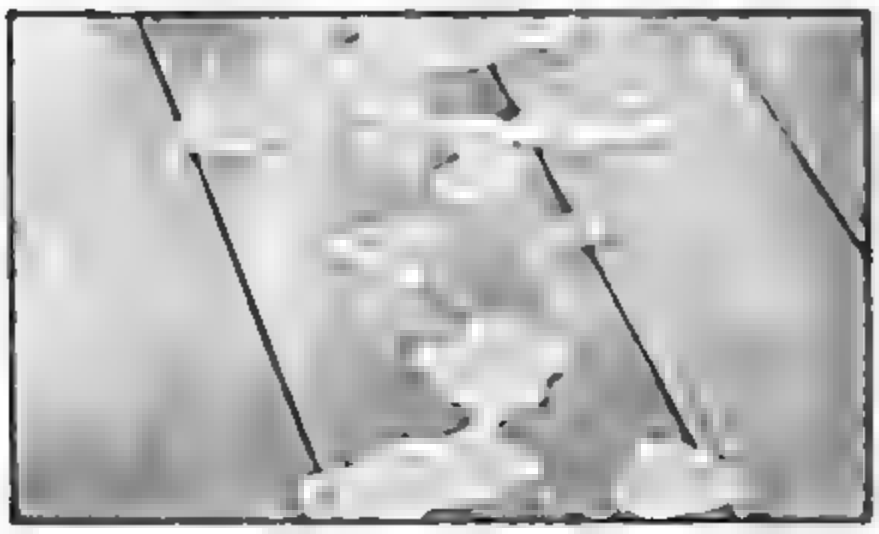
Irako,

I hate him.

THERE WERE NO OTHER RONIN LODGING IN THIS COTTAGE

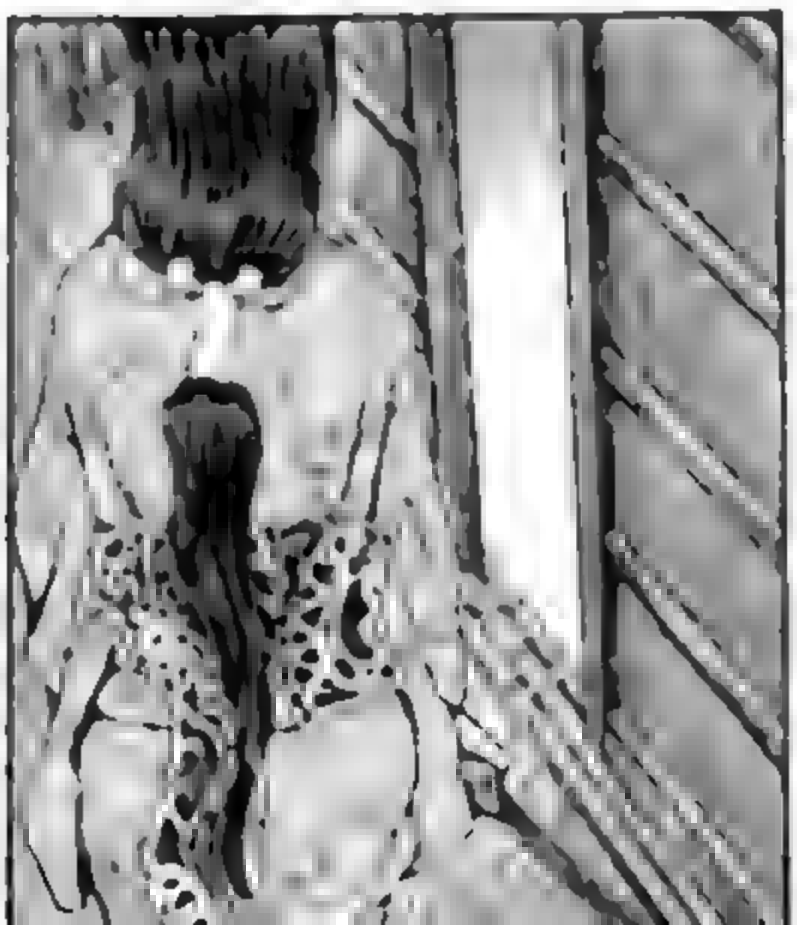
THROUGH THE SOUND OF THE RAIN, SHE HEARD ANOTHER NOISE



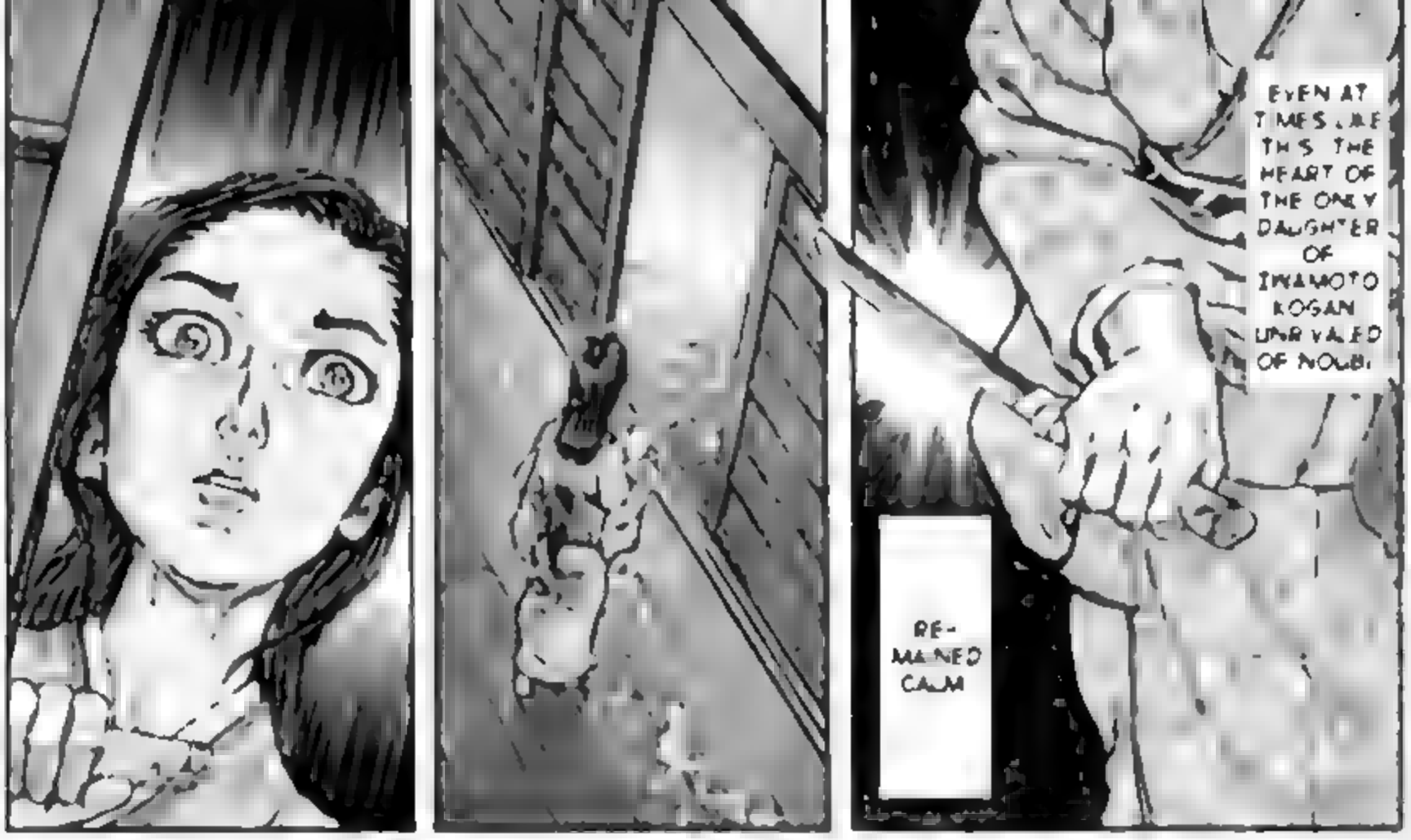









THE SAKAMAKI FAMILY HAS AWAY ON A PIC NIC


EVEN AT TIMES LIKE THIS THE HEART OF THE ONLY DAUGHTER OF YAMOTO KOGAN UNRIVALED OF NOUBI
RE-MAINED CALM



AND WHITE SKIN,

THE LONG HAIR,

HIDDEN BENEATH THAT SKIN,

APPEARED TO BE THOSE OF A WOMAN, BUT,

THE MUSCLE AND BONES,

WERE THOSE OF A FIRST CLASS SWORDS-MAN

Y-

You...

SUDDENLY, HER FATHER'S ENEMY APPEARED BEFORE HER EYES!

THE HATED FOE WHO HAD COMMITTED ADULTERY WITH HER FATHER'S MISTRESS,

EVEN WHILE BETROTHED TO THE MAIDEN!

That voice! Mie-dono!

Irako Seigen...

SHE COULD ONLY TREM-BLE.

SHE COULD NOT STAB HIM WITH HER DAGGER!

AND YET BECAUSE HE WAS COMPLETELY DEFENSE-LESS,

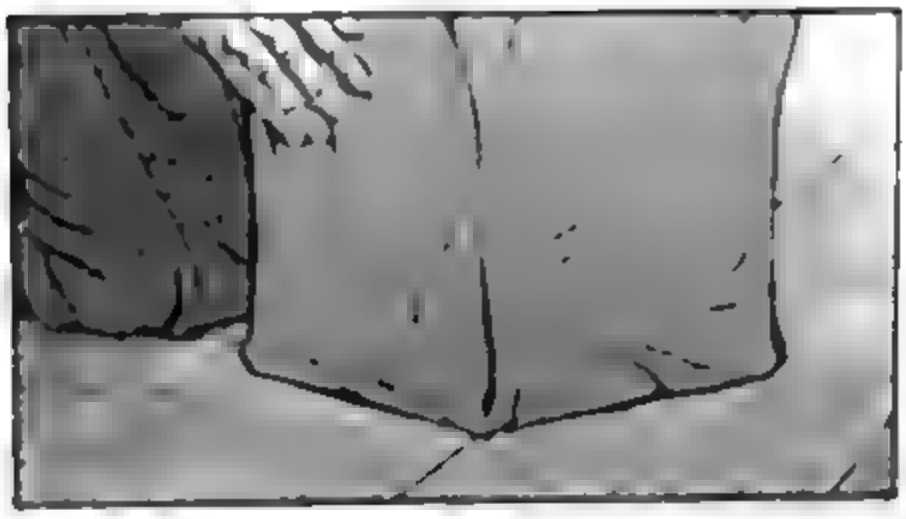
THE ENEMY WAS DEFENSE-LESS.

Wha ...

What do you want?

I was soaked by the rain...











GET OUT, NOW!

FUJIKI GENNO-SUKE IS NOT PROS-TRATE.

SO I HAVE COME BEARING MEDICINE.

I HEARD THAT FUJIKI GENNOSUKE-DONO HAD FALLEN ILL.

THIS IS HIHI'S "SOU."

THE WORD "SOU" MEANT "CHARRED"

IT WAS BELIEVED THAT THE HEAD HAVING THE "MARK OF HEAVEN" CONCEALED AN EVEN GREATER HEALING POWER

FROM ANCIENT TIMES, THE CHARRED REMAINS OF PRIMATES WERE HIGHLY TREASURED AS A MEDICINE TO CURE ANY SORT OF AILMENT.

NOT EVEN THE DAIMYOU,

CAN OBTAIN A "SOU" WITH THE MARK OF HEAVEN.

ABOUT THE MYSTERIOUS EFFECTS OF A CHARRED HEAD IN THE WARRING STATES PERIOD

KOGAN HAD BEEN CAREFUL TO TELL HIS DAUGHTER,

...SHE WANTED THIS MIRACLE CURE SO BADLY SHE COULD TASTE IT.

IN ORDER TO SAVE GENNOSUKE FROM HIS COMA WHEN EVEN THE DOCTOR HAD ABANDONED HIM.

I PRESENT THIS TO YOU,

AS A GIFT FROM THE SURUGA DAINAGON, LORD TADANAGA.

Get out.

I will not accept pity from an enemy

PAINS ME ABOVE ALL ELSE.

TO BE CALLED AN ENEMY BY YOU, MIE-DONO,

I SWEAR TO YOU I NEVER COMMITTED ADULTERY.

WAS DUE TO MY LACK OF VIRTUE.

HOWEVER, THE FACT THAT KOGAN-SENSEI THOUGHT I HAD,

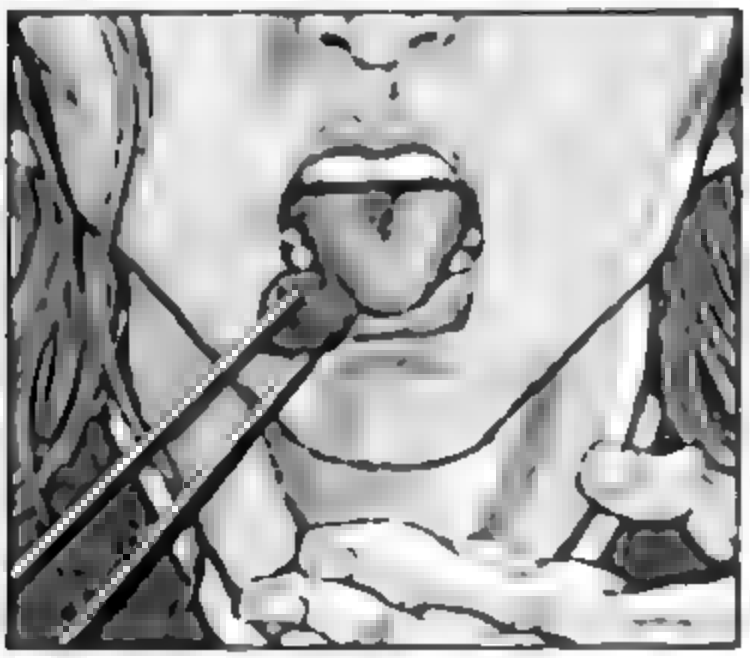
I HAVE ONLY MYSELF TO BLAME.

I AM MERELY CARING FOR IKU,

BECAUSE SHE WAS MY MASTER'S BELOVED.

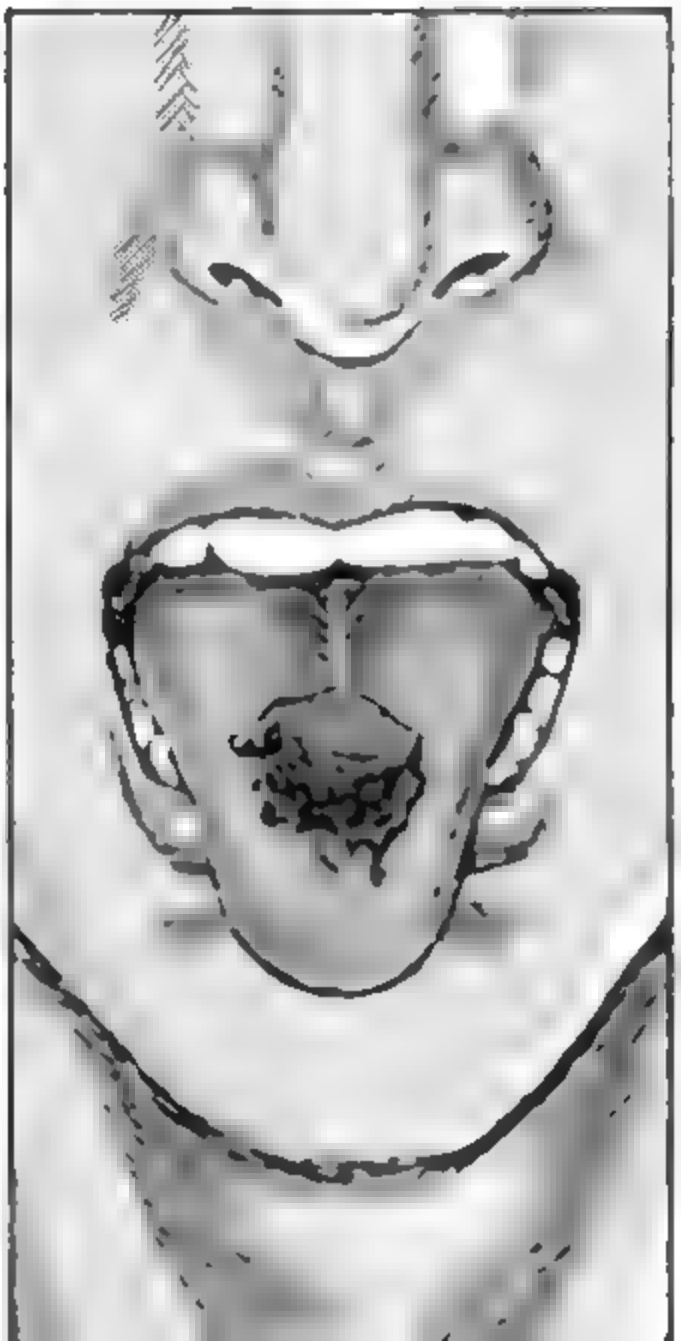
BUT YOU ARE LIVING WITH IKU...





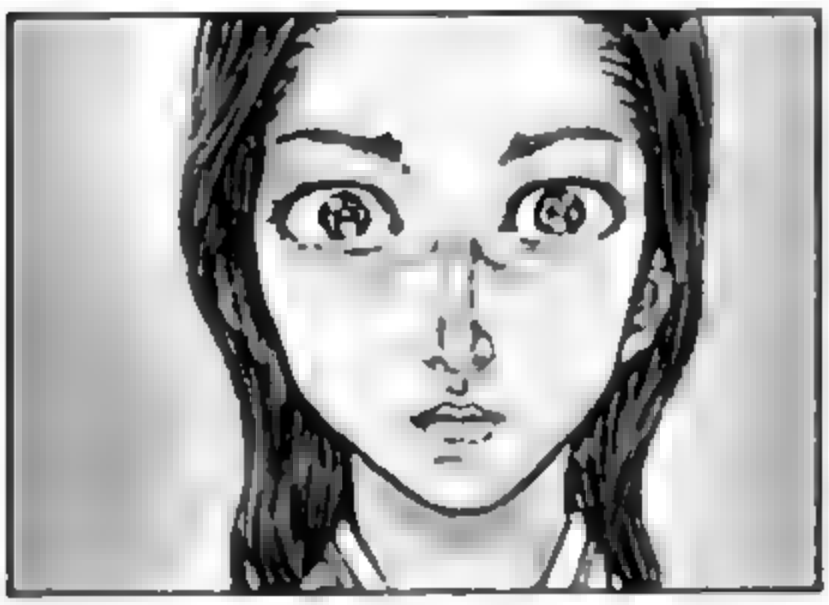



IN ORDER TO PROVE THAT IT WAS NOT POISONED
SEVERN PAID TRIBUTE TO THE KING AND SAW IT MASTICATED

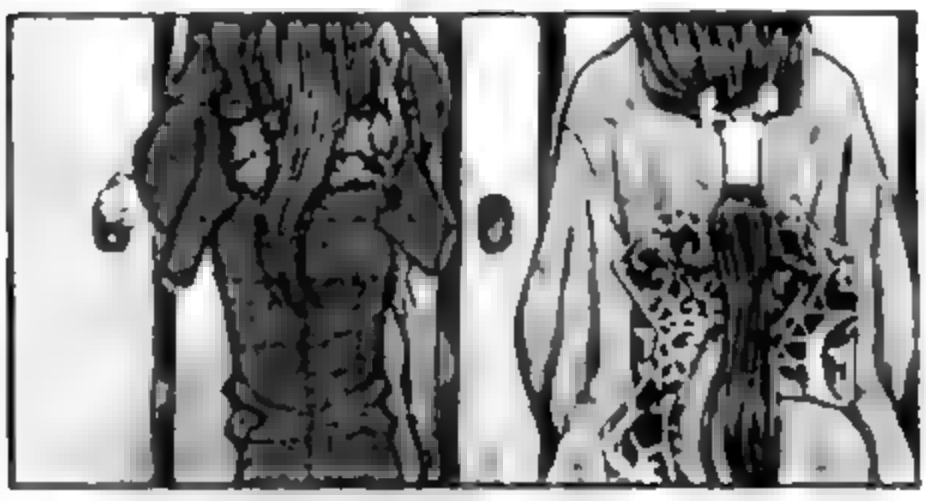




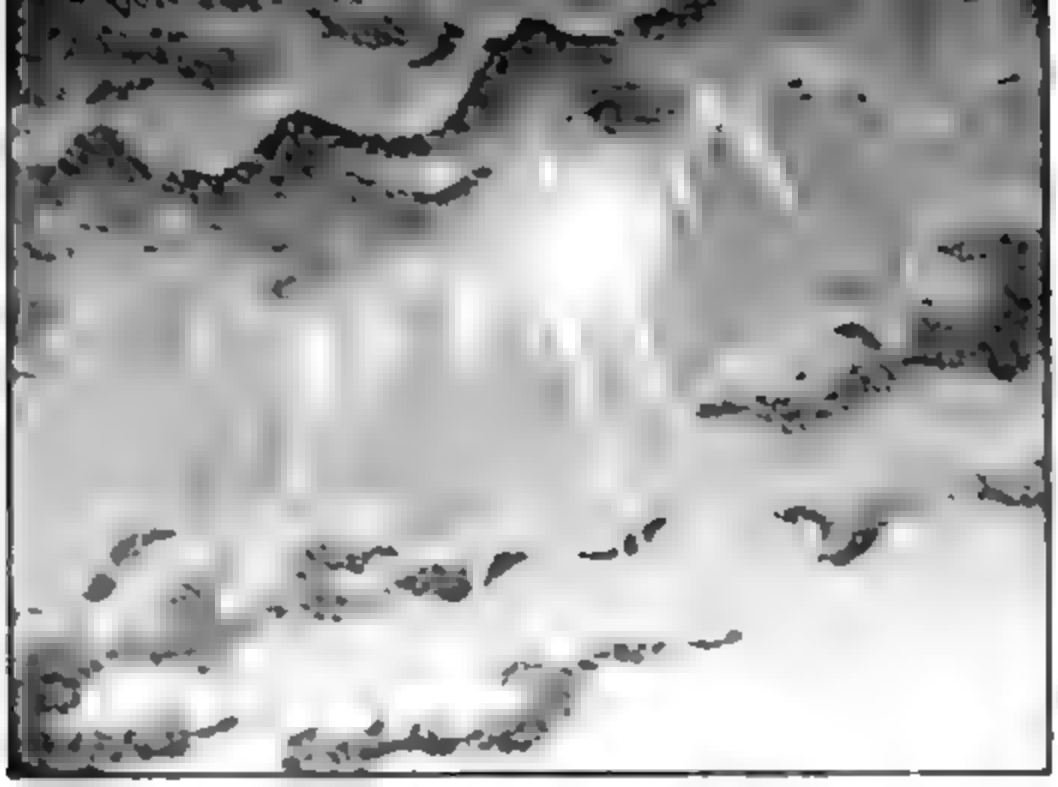








THE RAIN HAS STOPPED.











I CAN SEE THE RAIN AND THE WIND,

BY SOUND AND SMELL.

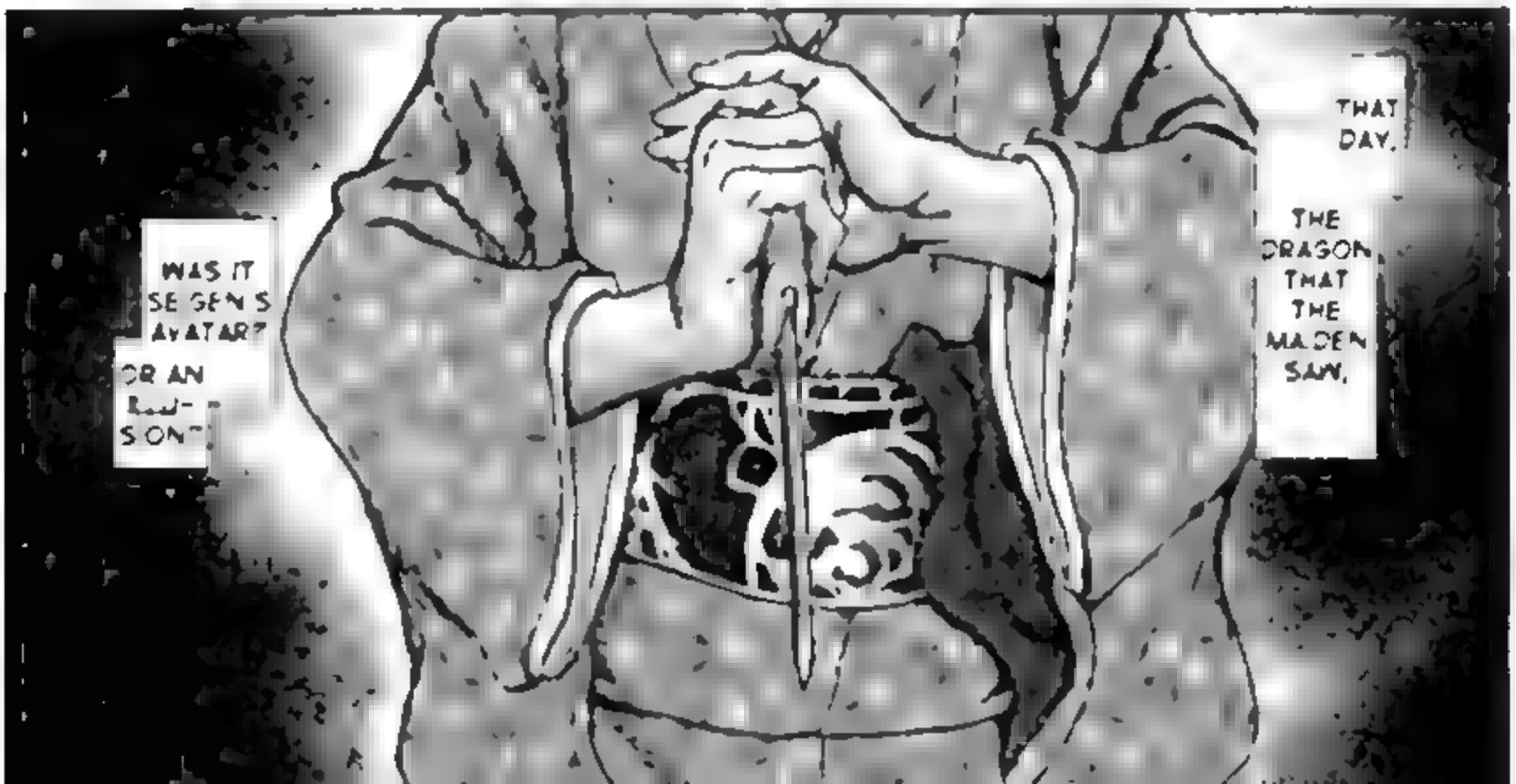
BUT THERE IS JUST ONE THING I CANNOT SEE.

HOW I WOULD LIKE TO SEE THAT ONE THING AGAIN.

A RAINBOW...

WHAT THING IS THAT?




WAS IT SE GEN S AVATAR?
OR AN Real- SON?
THAT DAY.
THE DRAGON THAT THE MAIDEN SAW.

CHAPTER 74
ICHINOJI




THIS IS A SUMMER GIFT BESTOWED ON US BY OUR LORD.
IT'S AN EXOTIC FRUIT FROM OVERSEAS.

AT THAT TIME WATER-MELON WAS A LUXURY ITEM

KOGAN-SENSEI SAYS,
PLEASE HELP YOUR-SELVES!

THE IDEA OF LEAVING THE BAND,

NEVER OCCURRED TO THE YOUNG TIGERS





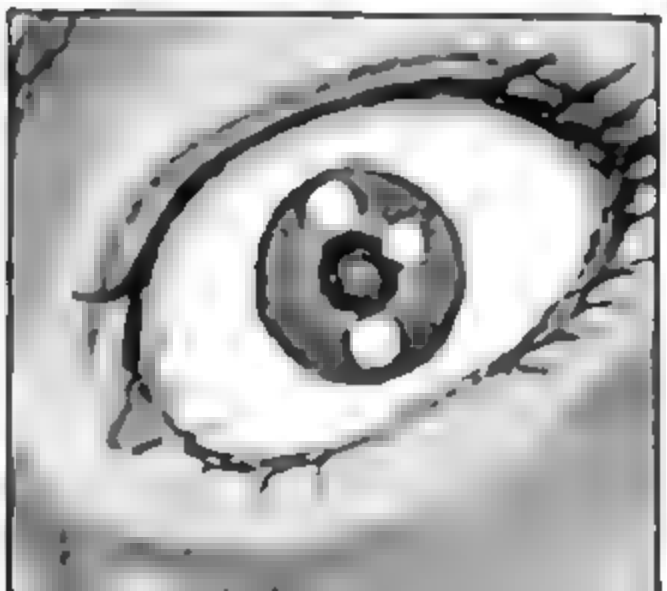





LOFT







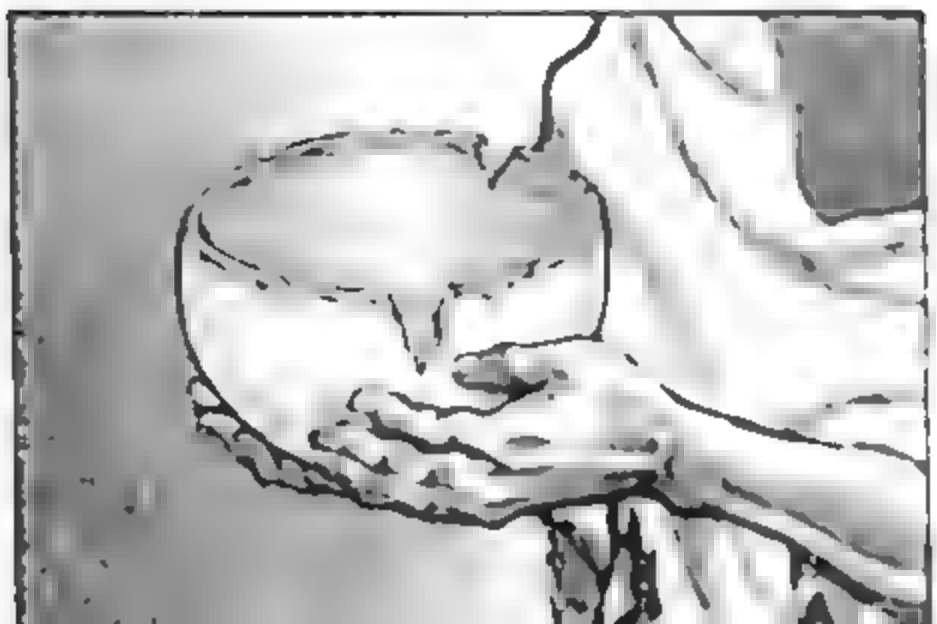

THE INSENSATE SENTINEL CRUCIFIED HIS "MAN OF HEAVEN"
THE ASTRAL TWIN INSTINCTIVELY CRAVING MEDICINAL HERBS





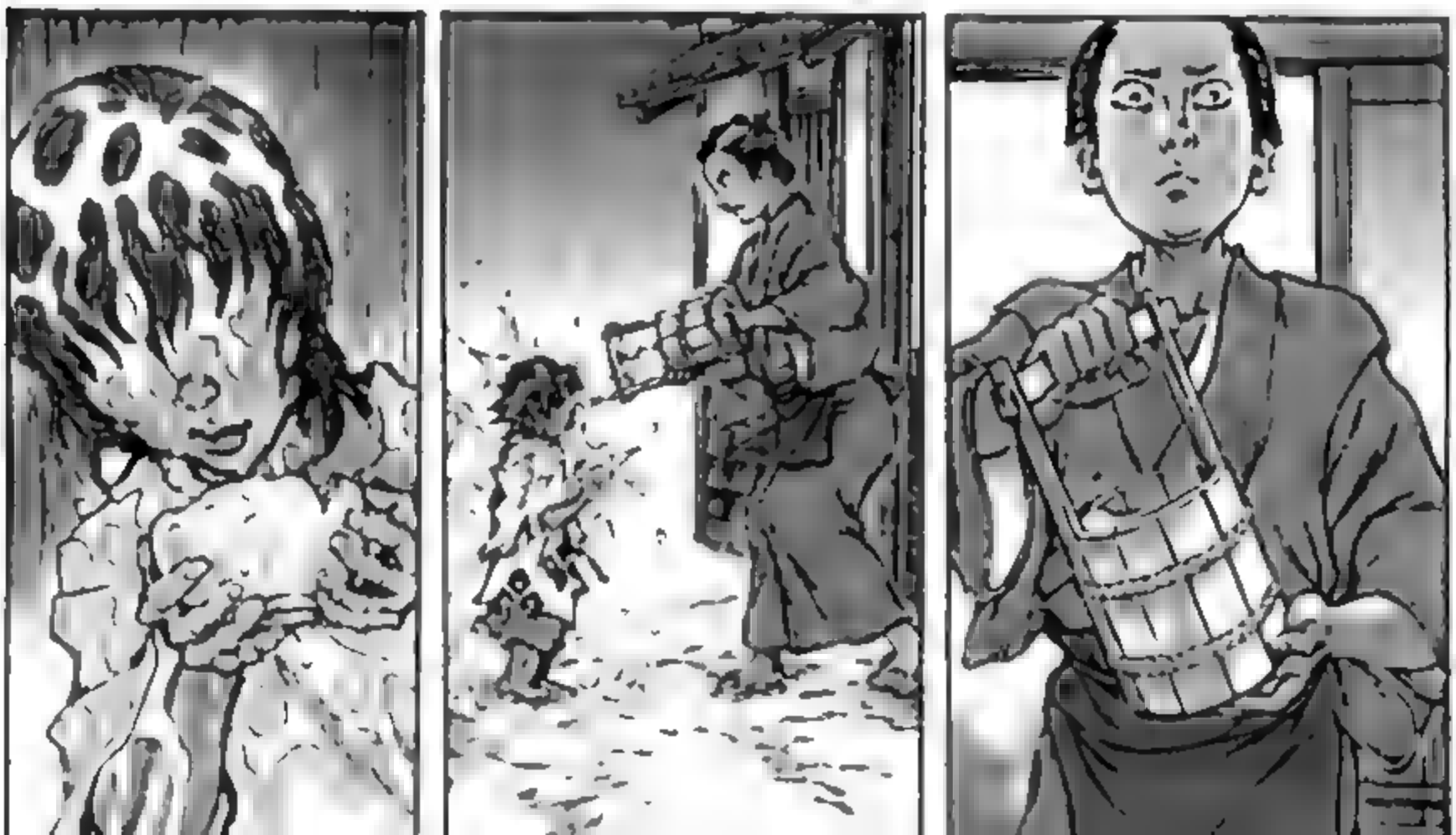




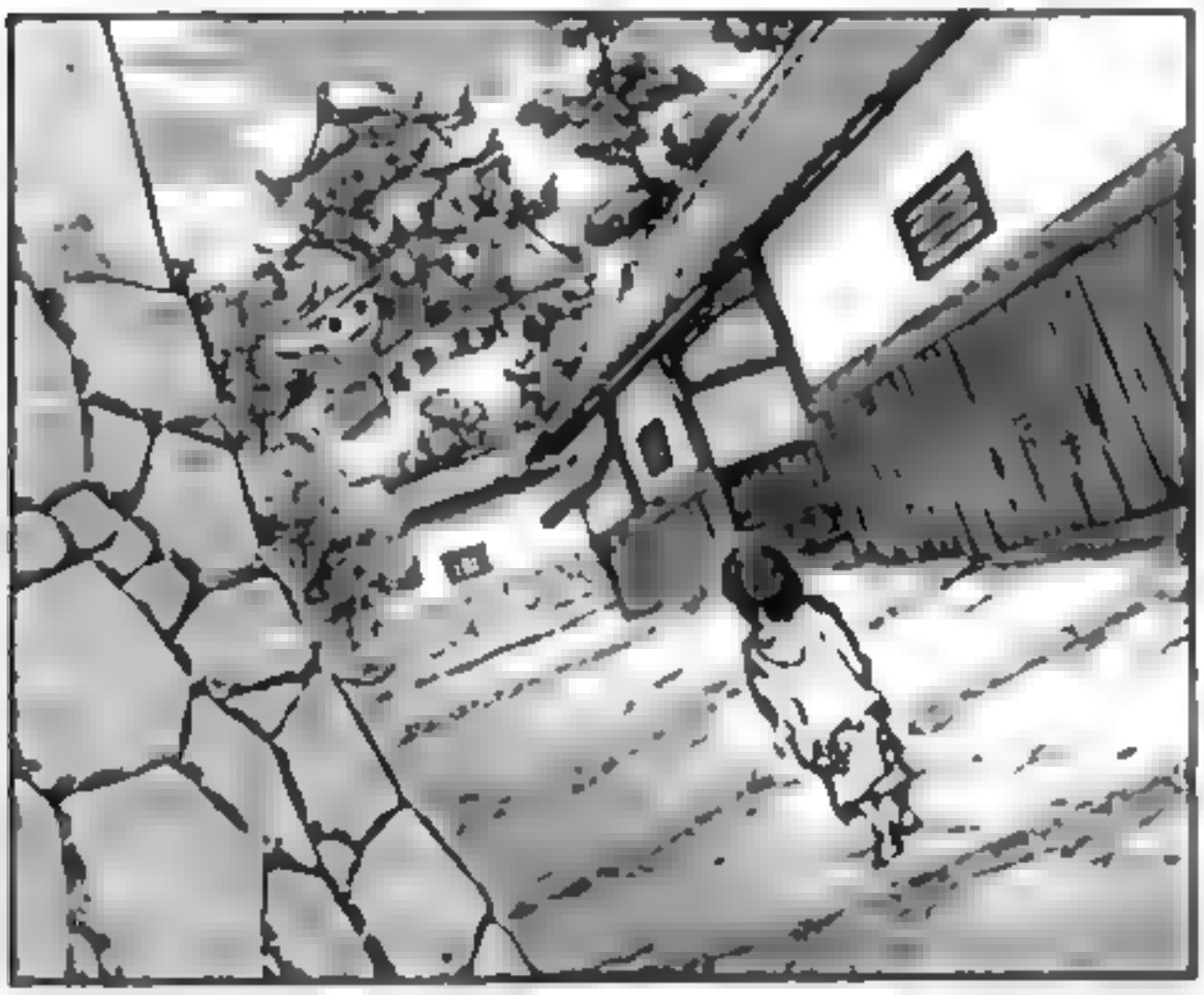


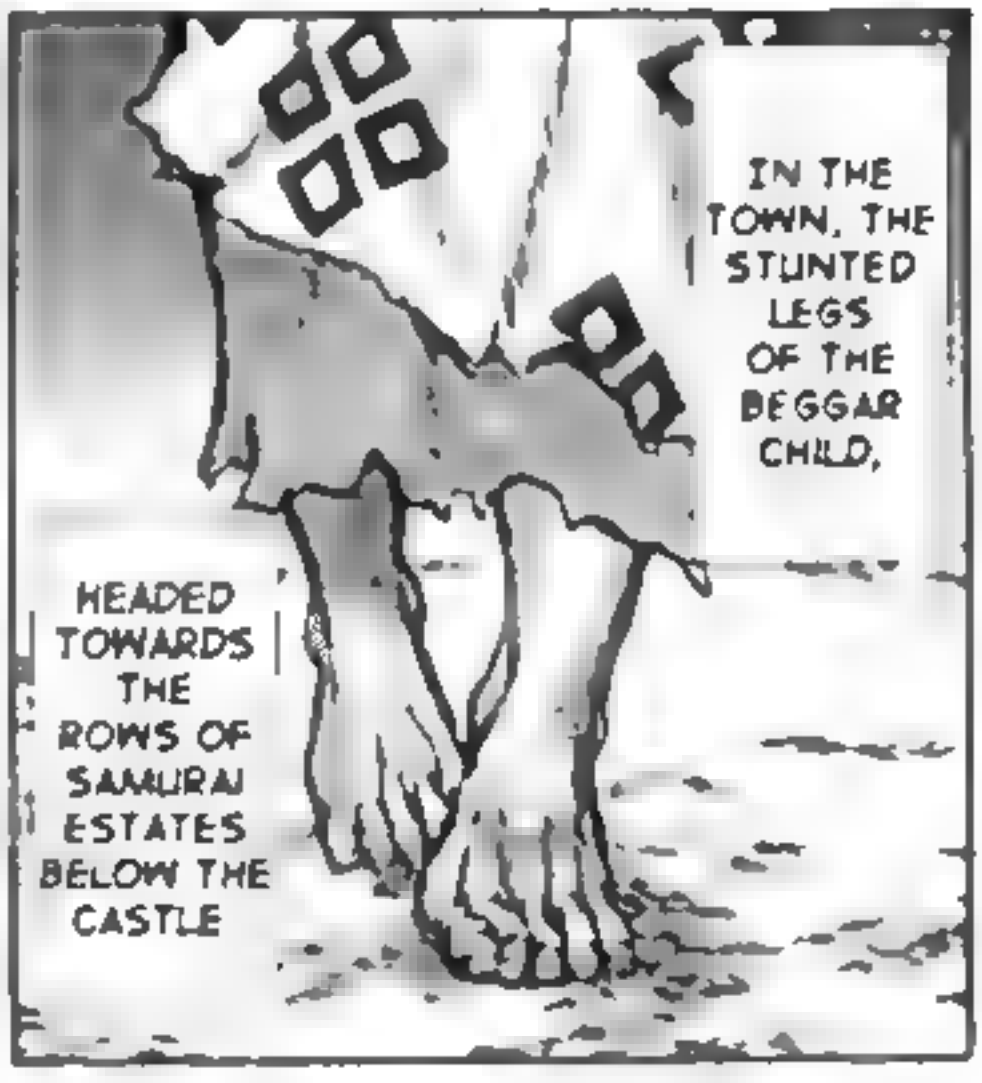











IN THE TOWN, THE STUNTED LEGS OF THE BEGGAR CHILD,
HEADED TOWARDS THE ROWS OF SAMURAI ESTATES BELOW THE CASTLE


THE CHILD'S MIND, BLUNTED BY MALNU-TRITION,


WITH WARRIORS DASHING ABOUT ON HORSE-BACK,
IT WAS AN EXTREMELY DANGER-OUS PLACE FOR AN OUTCASTE

















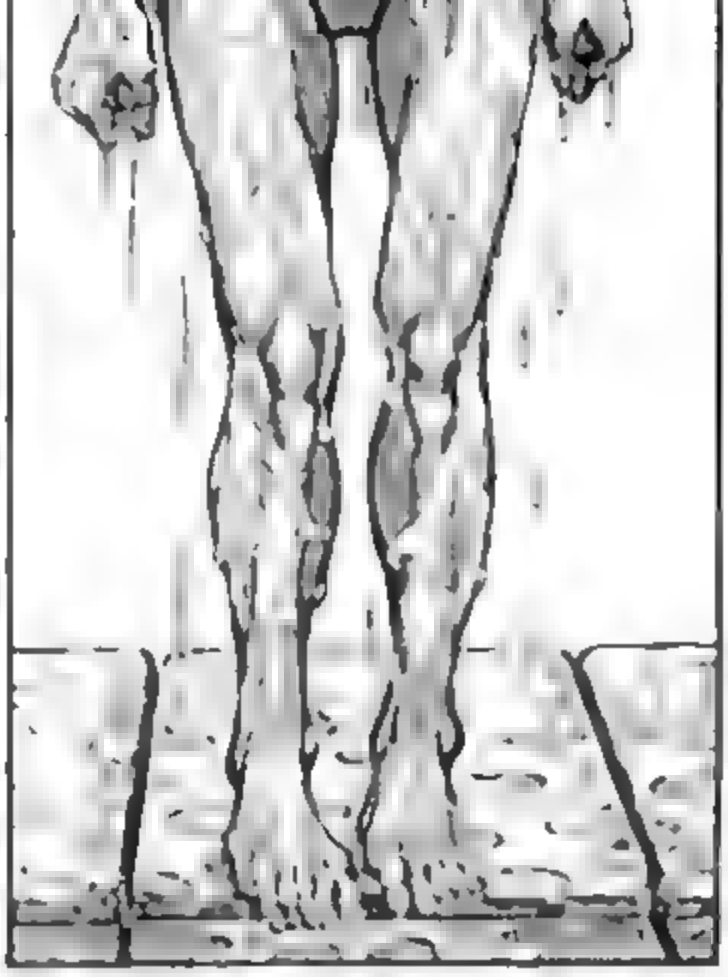


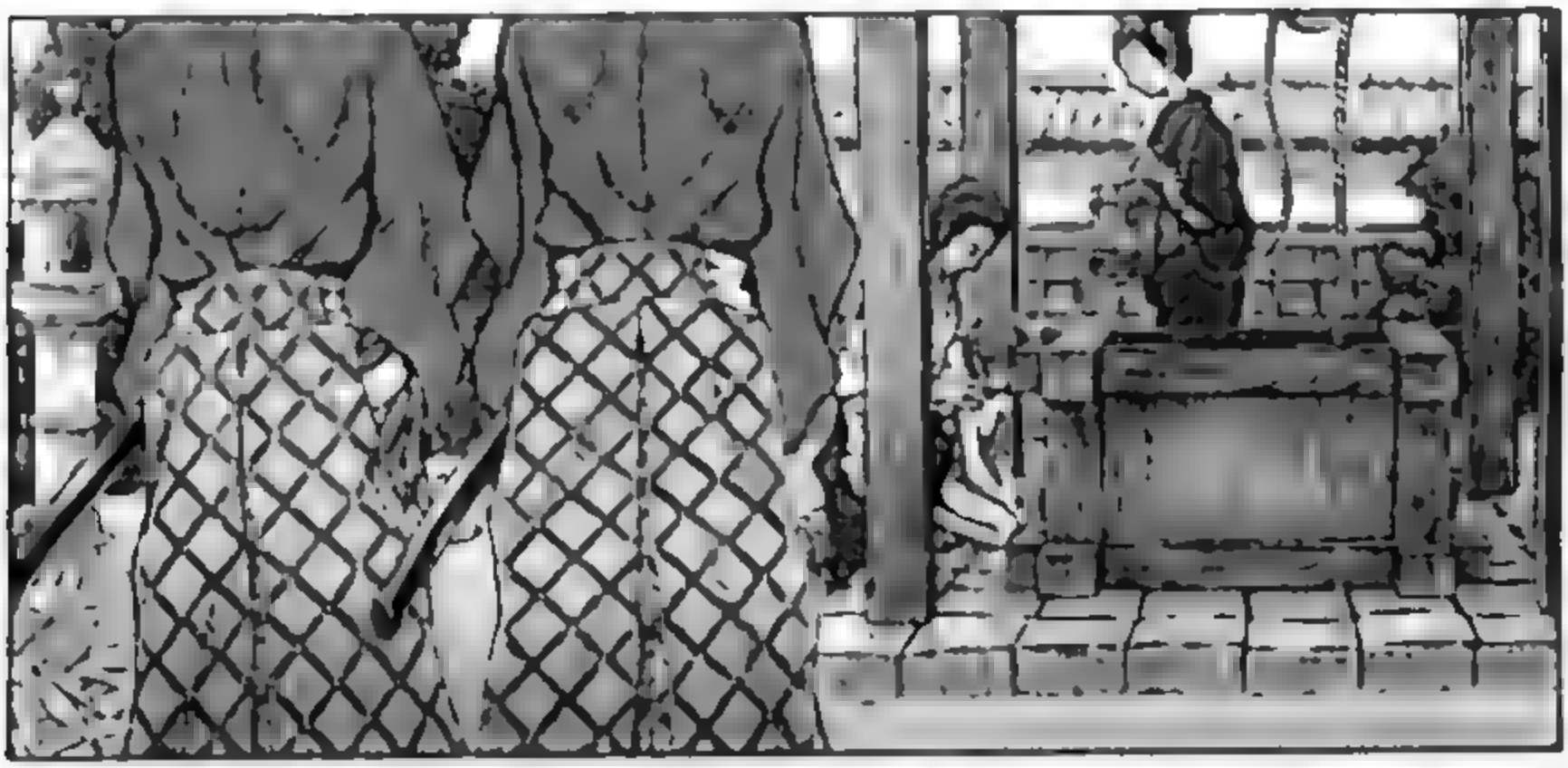








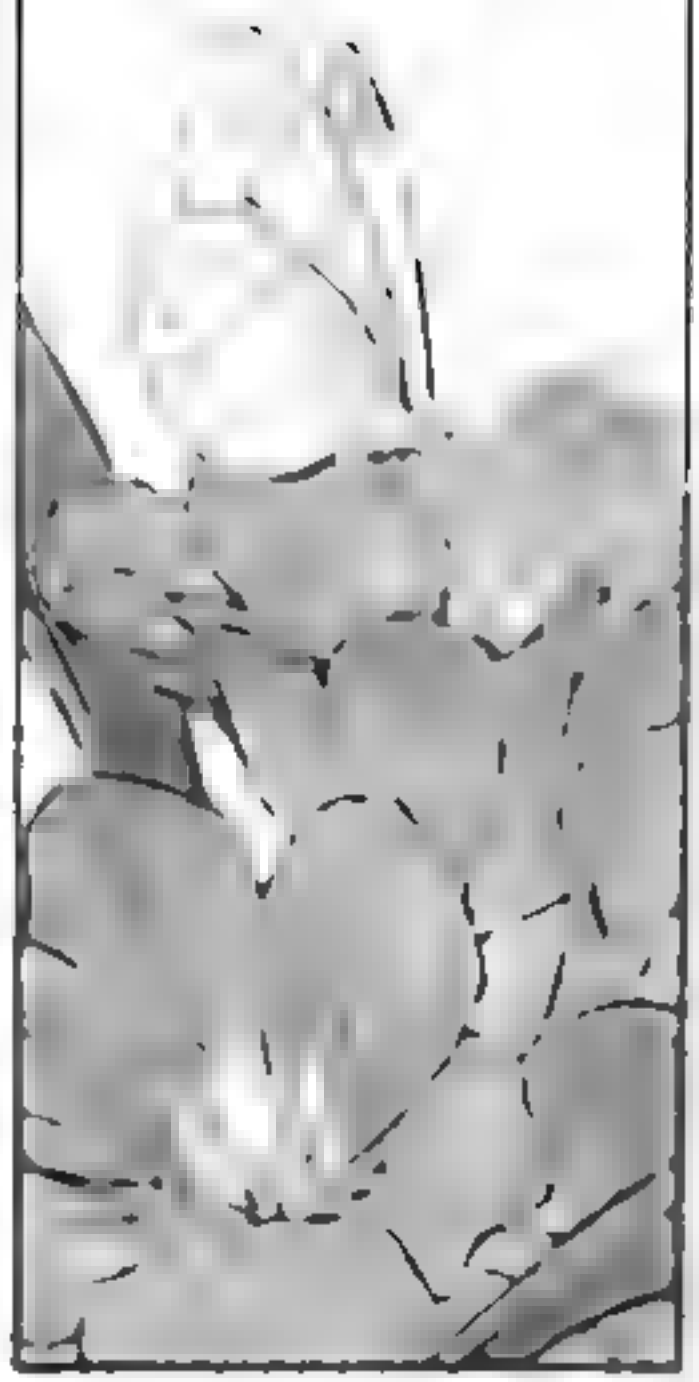







WHY IS IRAKO-SAMA TOUCHING IT WITH HIS OWN HANDS?
THIS IS BETTER THAN IT DE-SERVES





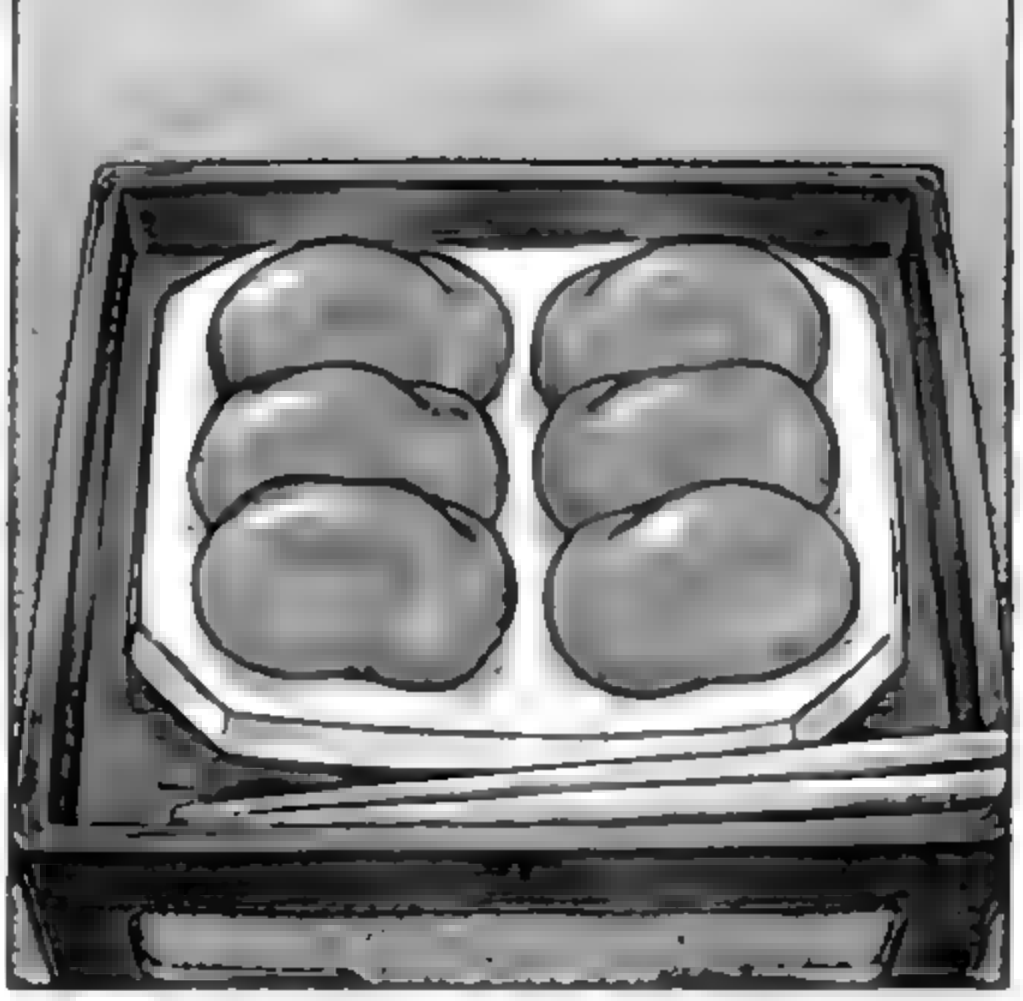





TO A COMMONER IT MUST LOOK LIKE HEAVEN
A SAMURAI'S GARDEN









*A sticky dumpling made with rice flour and mugwort

DON'T LET IT GET STUCK IN YOUR THROAT

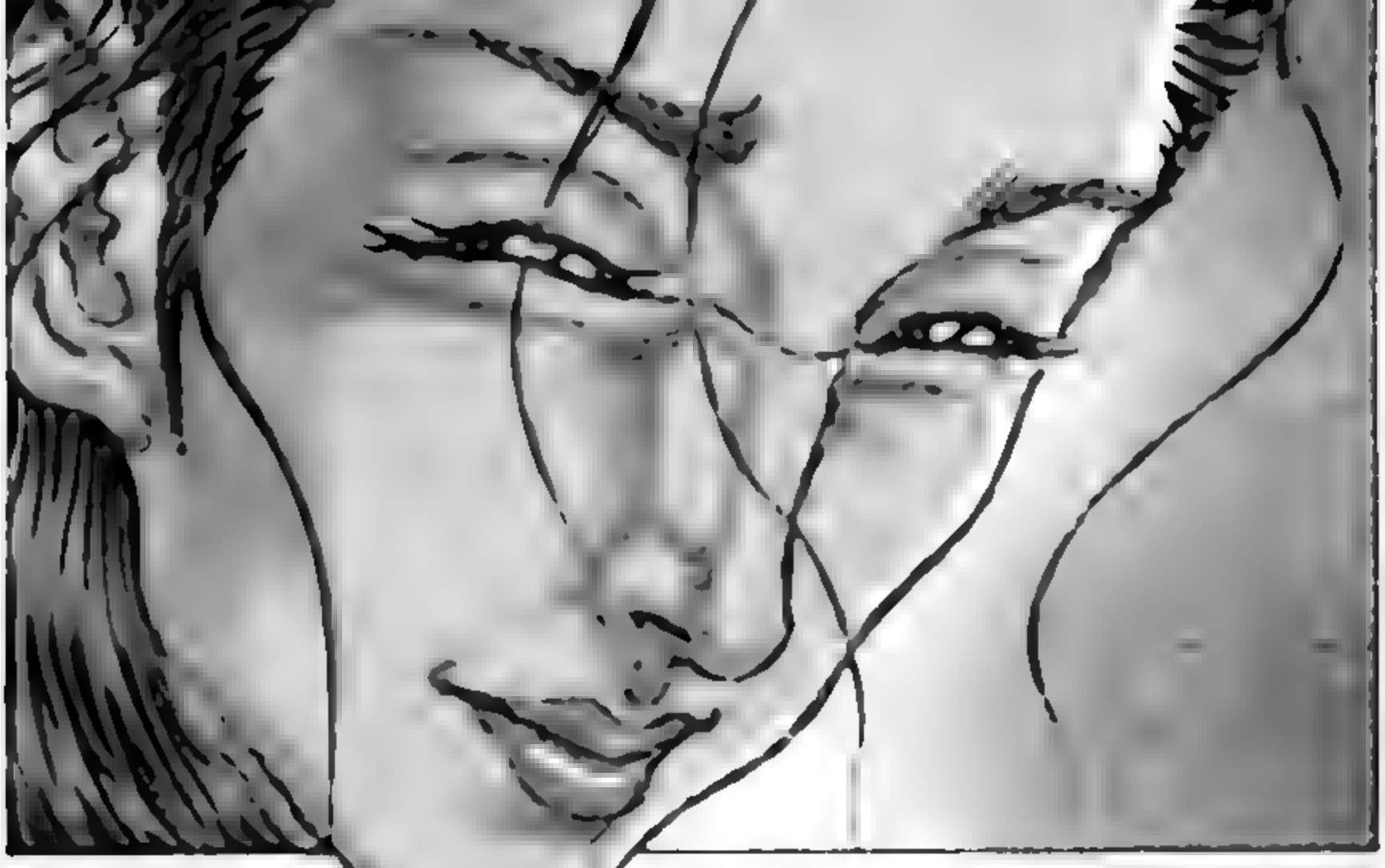






SO DISGUSTING

SHE EATS LIKE A COW








IRAKO-
SAWA...









IF YOU GIVE MY NAME, THEY WILL LOOK AFTER HER.

TAKE HER TO THE TOUDOUZA ESTATE.

ALSO,

THE STENCH OF DEATH IS HANGING ABOUT THE HUT BELOW THE BRIDGE IN TSUSHIMA.

OUT OF CHARITY, WE SHOULD PAY FOR A BURIAL.

IT'S PROBABLY HER MOTHER OR FATHER.

AS YOU WISH.

IT'S GETTING DARK..

















WAS BORN A SAMURAI.

SAMURAI.

"BECAUSE I AM DESPISED AS A MEMBER OF THE TOUDOUZA, I HAVE LEARNED TO ACCEPT INSULTS."

SEIGEN WAS NOT REBUKED FOR KILLING THE TWO NINJAS DISPATCHED BY THE SURUGA DOMAIN

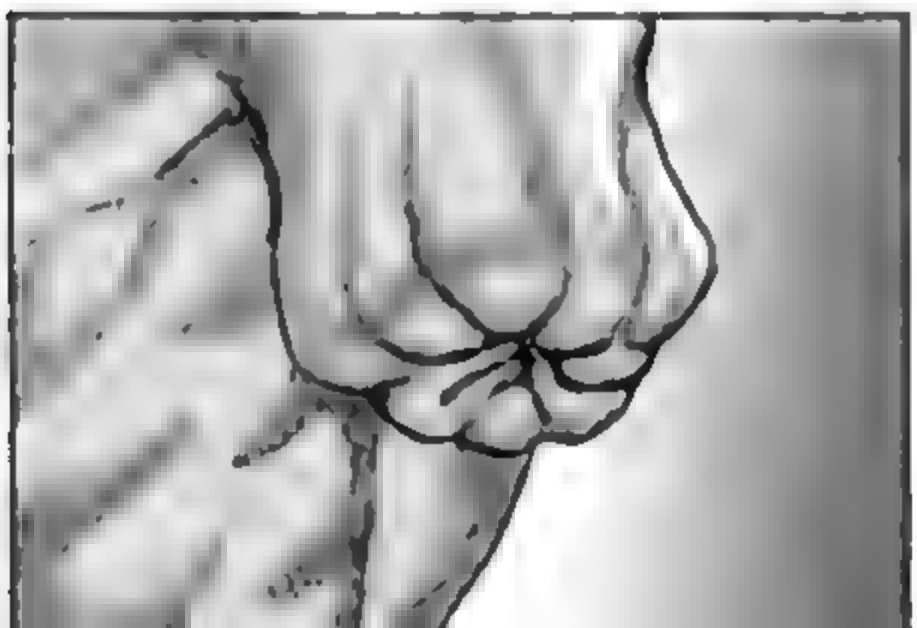
A SWORD UNRIVALED UNDER HEAVEN

WAS IT THE DIVINE PROTECTION OF ICHINOJI?

CHAPTER 75
LOVE








FUJIKI-
DONO...



EVEN THE DOCTOR HAD GIVEN UP HOPE

THANK GODDESS YOU HAVE RECOVERED

DID YOU SEE THE SANZU RIVER?*

DID YOU MEET GOZU AND ME-U?*

*Lit., Ox-Head and Horse-Face, guardians of the underworld.

IT WAS ABOUT TWO-TEEN DAYS

SINCE HE HAD AWAKENED FROM THE COMA

WELL... HE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A GENTLEMAN OF FEW WORDS

IS THAT SO?

HIS FIVE SENSES HAVE NOT YET RETURNED COMPLETELY HIS EARS...

I HAVE FOUND THE WAY

TO DEFEAT SEIGEN'S SWORD

WITH HIS TWO FINGERS

HE HAD KILLED THE FLEA IN MID-AIR

MAGNIFICENT!

THE RESURRECTED FUJIKI, RADIATED A GLOW OF HEALTH.

AS IF ALL HIS CELLS HAD BEEN REPLACED

ONE DAY
AT THE END
OF APRIL.

THE ESTATE OF
LORD HYUUGA
HANBEE MASAHISA
MARTIAL ARTS
INSTRUCTOR OF
SURUGA DOMAIN.

JUST TO BE CERTAIN, YOU MUST ALLOW ME TO INSPECT YOUR BODY.

I believe can compensate for the loss of one arm.

The swelling muscles of Fujiki Gennosuke's back.

I AM IZUBUCHI HEIJIROU.

I AM ISHIMURA ITTETSU.

I AM AIKI KYUUZOU.

SWORDSMANSHIP THAT IS APPROPRIATE FOR OUR LORD'S APPRECIATION.

IN THIS PLACE, YOU WILL DEMONSTRATE WHETHER OR NOT YOU POSSESS,

I AM CALLED FUJIKI GENNOSUKE.

I AM AFRAID YOUR MEN MIGHT BE INJURED...

KOGANRYUU DOES NOT USE A REFEREE.

I BEG YOUR PARDON, HYUUGA-SAMA.

SURELY IT WAS THE ONE-ARMED SWORDSMAN,

WHO SHOULD BE CONCERNED ABOUT THE OUTCOME OF THE MATCH.

THE FACES OF THE THREE OPPONENTS FLUSHED RED.

A PRACTICE SWORD CALLED A "HIKIHADA."*

DO NOT WORRY. THEY WILL USE...

THEY MAY STRIKE EACH OTHER AS MUCH AS THEY LIKE WITHOUT SERIOUS INJURY.

*Lit., toad skin

THE BAMBOO WRAPPED IN LEATHER WAS PERFORATED WITH HOLES.

THIS YIELDING WEAPON, ROBBED OF ITS LETHALITY,

WAS AN INVENTION OF THE YAGYUU SHINKAGE-RYUU

TO THE TIGER ACCUS-TOMED TO BREAKING THE BONES OF HIS OPPONENTS WITH A BOKKEN OF EVERGREEN OAK,

IT FELT LIKE A TOY IN HIS HAND.

SFX Kuuuu

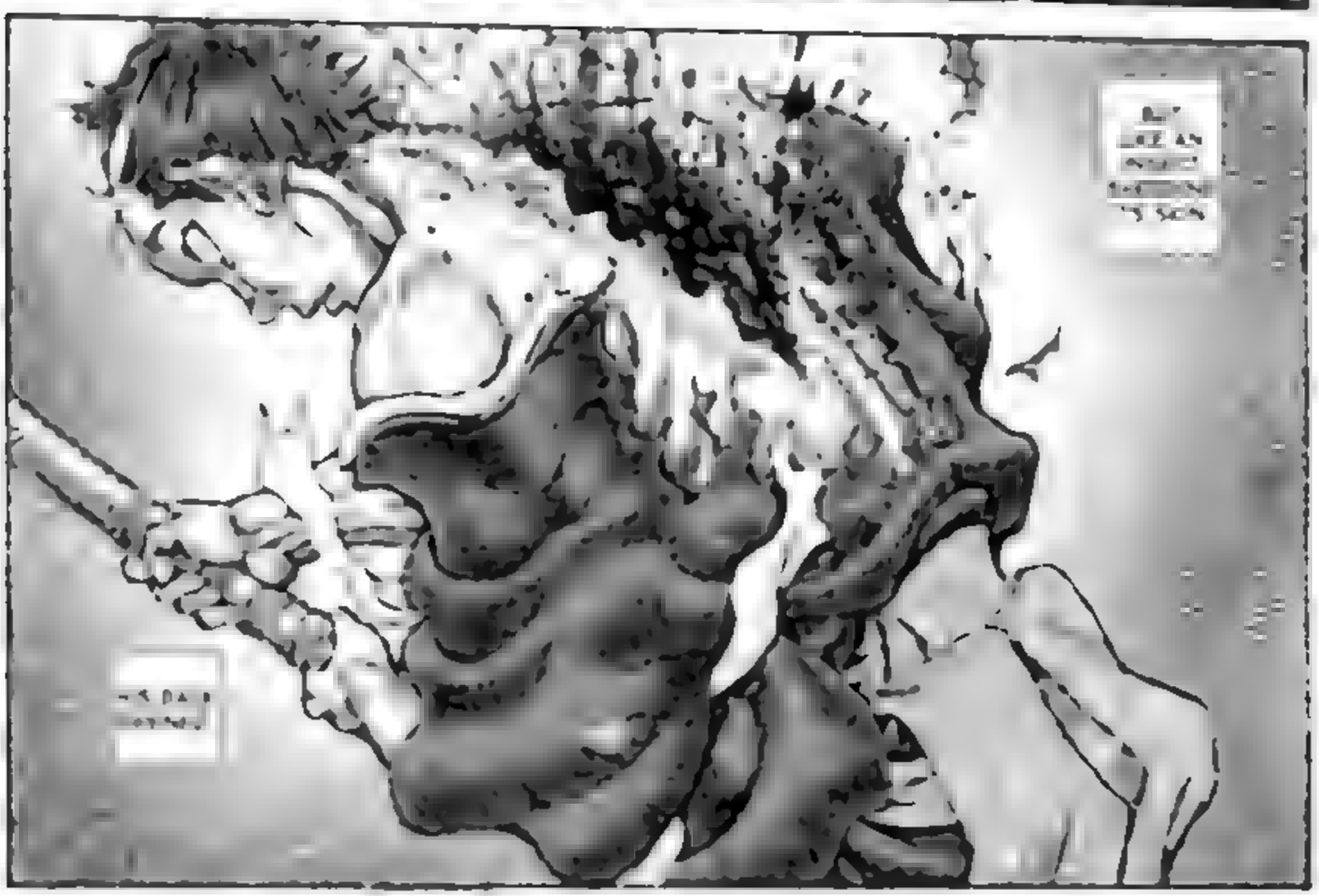
THE ONE WHO ADVANCED WAS HEIJIROU, THE HEIR OF IZUBUCHI HEIBEE OF THE SHINKAGE-RYUU

WIELDING THE HIKIHADA WAS HIS SPECIALTY.

YOU COME AT ME ONE AT A TIME?

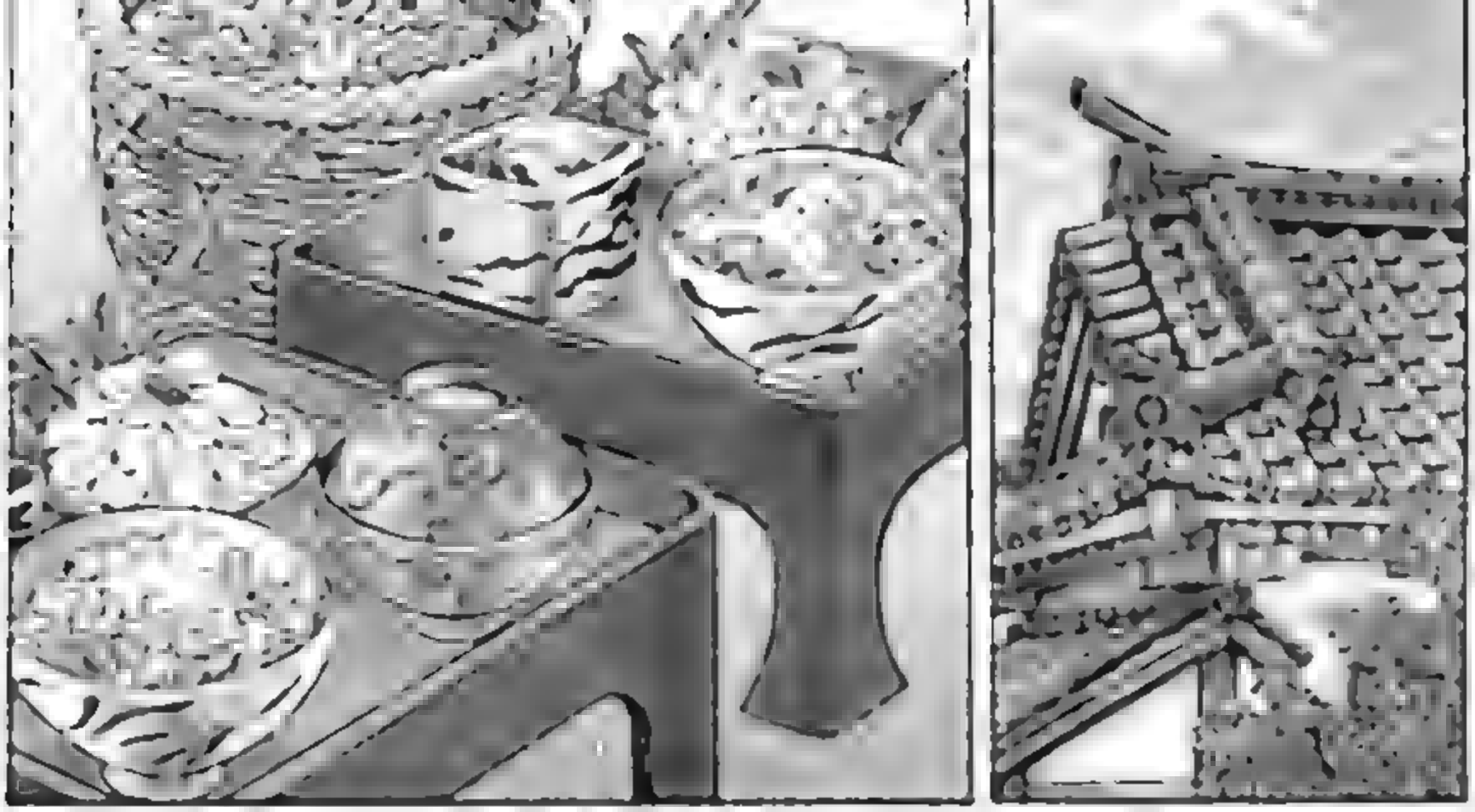




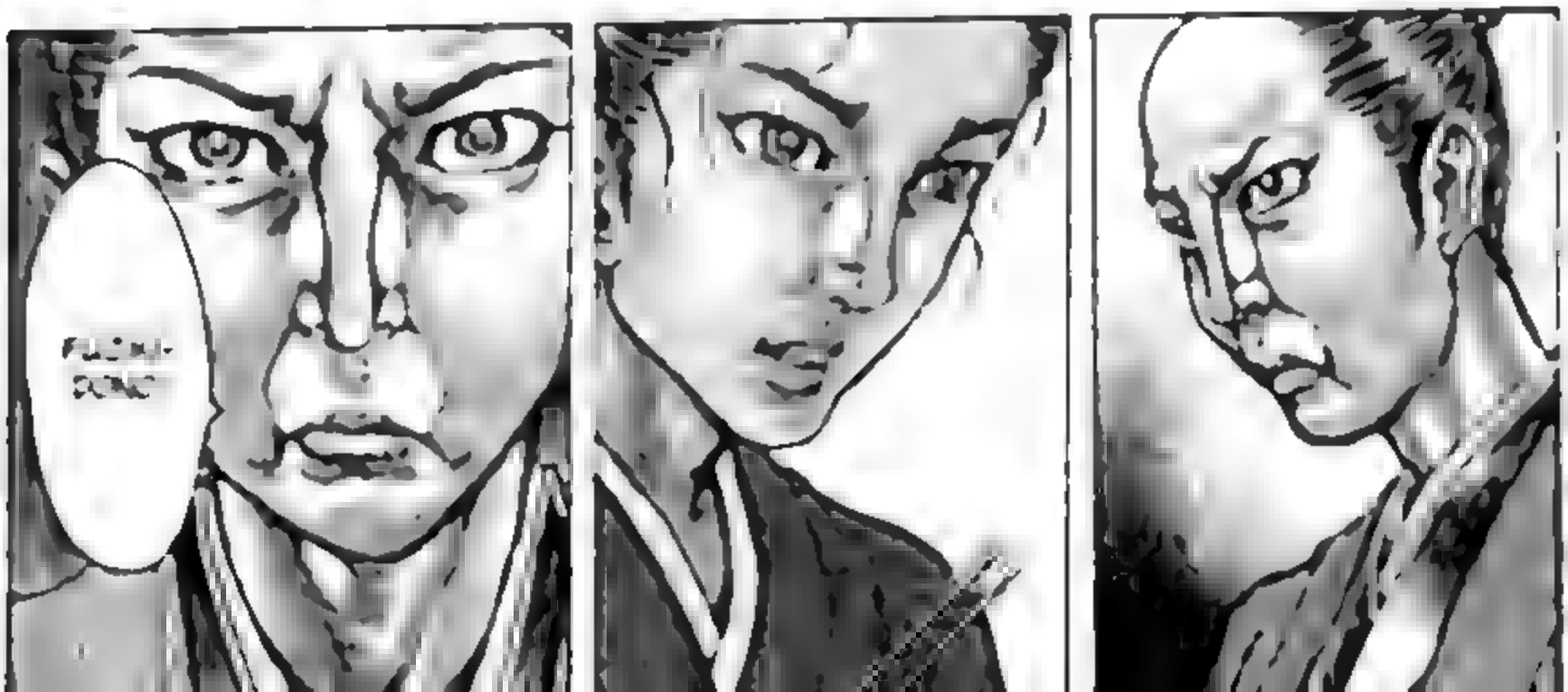









HYUUGA HANBEE APOLOGIZED FOR THE AFFRONT OF TESTING GENNOSUKE'S SWORDS-MANSHIP,
AND TREATED HIM TO A FEAST.


FU-FU-FU-FU-

HIS IS A DEMON SWORD.

I HAVE SEEN IRAKO SEIGEN'S SKILL.

BUT YOURS IS THE RIGHTEOUS SWORD, FITTING FOR THE DIVINE TOKUGAWA CLAN.


AS THEY RE-TURNED HOME
THE CHERRY BLOSSOMS DANCED ABOUT ME AND GENNO-SUKE LIKE A SNOWSTORM


WE SHOULD HAVE BORROWED AN UMBRELLA FROM HYUUGA-SAMA.












MIE-SAMA.

I HAVE BEEN DEFEATED BY VENGEANCE.

EITHER THE KUGAN FAMILY ESTATE OR THE REPUTATION OF THE KUGAN-RYU...

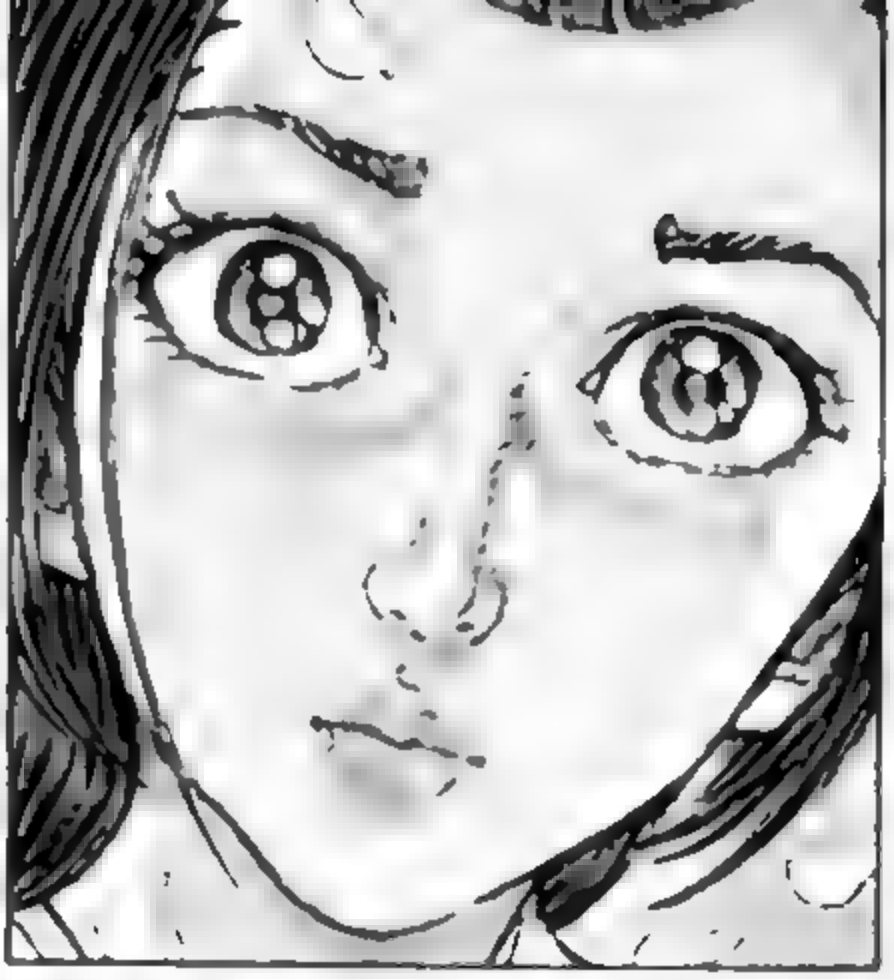
I WAS UNABLE TO PROTECT.

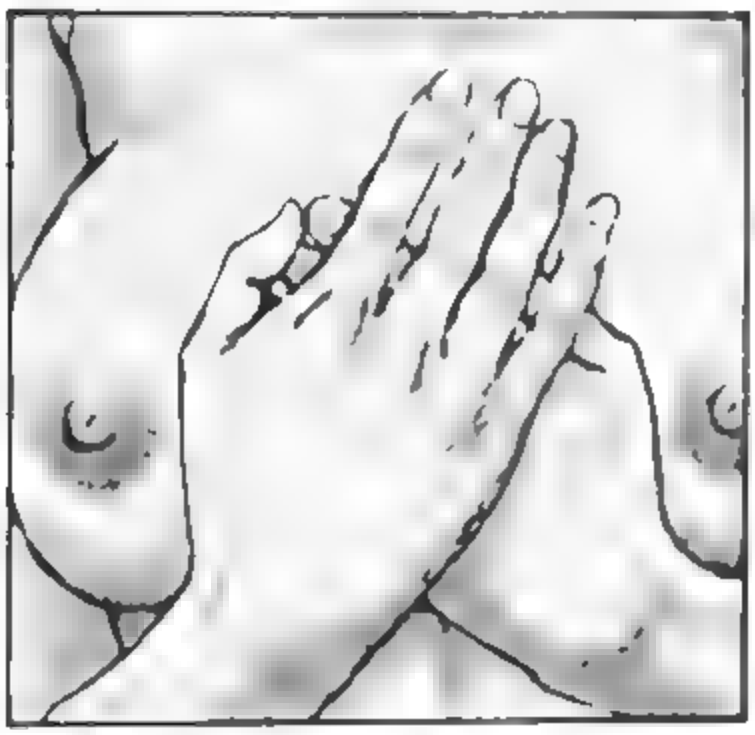
HOWEVER

AT LEAST I WILL PROTECT YOU, ME-SAMA.

WHAT STORMS MAY COME, I WILL NOT SUR-RENDER.








AS THE RETICENT GENNOSUKE UTTERED THIS VOW, HIS CHEEKS FLUSHED PINK AS THE CHERRY BLOSSOMS,
HE BURNED WITH LOVE FOR HER THE WORDS WERE SUCH THAT ANY YOUNG PERSON MIGHT OFFER WITHOUT A TRACE OF SINCERITY,


BUT THE UN STAINED MAIDEN
REALIZED THIS WAS THE MOST SACRED MOMENT OF HER LIFE

THEY WALKED SLOWLY SIDE BY SIDE AT THE SAME PACE

AND GENTLY HELD IT IN HER OWN

SHE FELT HIS KISS ON HER HAND

THE OKAKURA ESTATE

SO,

THE TIGER IS REBORN.

I WILL BE EMPLOYED BY THE SURUGA DOMAIN WITH ITS WEALTH OF 550,000 KOKU.

THE TIGER WILL BE AN UNPARALLELED STEPPING-STONE.

IT IS GOOD.

IF I TRIUMPH AT THE TOURNAMENT,

I MAY BE LAME AND ALSO BLIND.

BUT WHEN I CHALLENGE THE FEROCIOUS TIGER

SEIGEN'S SWORD ALONE HAS ACHIEVED DIVINE STATUS...

FOR THAT REASON, THE GENIUS SWORDSMAN,

HE USED HIS BLINDNESS AND HIS CRIPPLED FOOT TO THE UTMOST TO PROMOTE HIMSELF.

HOWEVER,

IF HIS SWORDSMANSHIP HAD REACHED DIVINE STATUS WHEN THE LIGHT WAS STOLEN FROM HIM

THERE WAS ALSO A SWORDSMAN WHOSE LEFT ARM HAD BEEN STOLEN

EVEN DRAGGING HIS GOOD FOOT AS HE WALKED.

INTENTIONALLY EXAGGERATED HIS LIMP,

SEIGEN
DID N
YET
KNOW
THE
TIGER WAS
NOT THE
TIGER OF
THE PAST





CHAPTER 76
ONE-EYED DRAGON



HIS RIGHT EYE

WAS PIERCED BY A BROKEN TWIG

THERE WAS A TALE

THAT BE CAUSE IT DIDDED OUT HE ATE IT

HAD NOT ARRIVED IN THE SHOGUN'S

ALTHOUGH PAST HIS PRIME HIS MENTORS NATURE

ON ONE OCCASION AT HIS ESTATE IN EDO, MASAMUNE RECEIVED AN INVITATION TO HIDETADA'S PALACE

THE DAY BEFORE THE AUDIENCE, HIDETADA'S MOST TRUSTED ADVISOR CONFIRMED THIS MESSAGE

AS WAS PRACTICE.

THE SHOGUN DESIRES THE FAMOUS SWORD YOU HAVE IN YOUR POSSESSION, "SHINOGITOU SHIROU YOSHIMITSU."

SUKE TADUO

IT WAS AN APPROPRIATE TREASURE TO PRESENT [illegible] TOKUGAWA CLAN

SHINOBU YOSHIMITSU [HAD] BEEN BEQUEATHED [illegible] BY THE LATE TOKUGAWA HIDEYOSHI

THAT THE SHOGUN DEMANDS THIS LIKE A CHILD,

IS BENEATH THE DIGNITY OF THE TOKUGAWA CLAN.

I, THE VASSAL MASAMUNE, SHALL DECIDE WHAT GIFT TO OFFER TO THE SHOGUN.

THIS WAS PERHAPS AN EVEN [illegible] SWORD AND-DOTE.

THAN THAT HE HAD EATEN HIS OWN EYEBALL

ACCORDING TO THE DAINAGON'S SECRET RECORDS,

ONE YEAR BEFORE THE IMPERIAL TOURNA-MENT FOUGHT WITH REAL BLADES,

THE SEMI-RETIRED SENDAI CHUUNAGON*, DATE MASAMUNE,

VISITED SUNPU ON HIS WAY TO THE CAPITAL

*Lit. "middle counselor", a step below Dainagon (great counselor)

IT WAS RECORDED THAT HE HAD AN AUDIENCE WITH TOKUGAWA TADANAGA.

IN THE SOTETS ROOM" IN THE NORTH-WEST CORNER OF THE INNER CITADEL,

THEY HAD A SECRET MEETING

AFTER THE INTER-VIEW,

駿河大納言徳川忠長

Suruga Dainagon
Tokugawa Tadanaga

仙台中納言伊達政宗

Sendai Chuunagon
Date Masamune

YOU APPEAR TO BE QUITE WELL...

DATE OYAJI-SAMA.*

*Respected elder

YOU ARE LOOKING SPLENDID AS WELL, DAINAGON-DONO.

THEY MUST BE FRIGHT-ENED BY THE GLARE OF THE ONE-EYED DRAGON.

THE MONKEYS ON MT. AKIBA

ARE STRANGELY QUIET TODAY.

NOT AT ALL. I AM SURPRISED HOW MUCH YOU RESEM-BLE LORD NOBUNAGA, DAINAGON-DONO.

NOBUNAGA WAS TADANAGA'S GRAND-UNCLE

AT THIS TIME, OYAJI-SAMA,

SUNPU IS SWARMING WITH UNEMPLOYED RONIN.

NEARLY EVERY DAY THEY COME HERE MERELY TO SELL THEMSELVES IN HOPES OF RECEIVING A STIPEND.

AS A MAN OF THE WORLD, HE CERTAINLY KNEW ABOUT THE RONIN PROBLEM

HE HAD TO GUARD AGAINST CARELESS UTTER-ANCE

OH?

MASAMUNE LOOKED AS IF HE WERE HEARING THIS FOR THE FIRST TIME

AS A RESULT, THE NUMBER OF RONIN REACHED 220,000.

AFTER THE GEN'NA ERA, IN ORDER TO SECURE THE TOKUGAWA SHOGUNATE, 17 DAIMYOU FAMILIES WORTH 3,400,000 KOKU WERE ABOLISHED OR DISCONTINUED.

WAS [illegible] TO INCITING TREASON [illegible] SHOGUNATE

ON A SUITABLE DAY WE WILL ASCERTAIN THEIR MARTIAL ART'S SKILL AND PERHAPS EMPLOY THOSE THAT HAVE PROVED THEIR MIGHT.

THERE ARE SO MANY REQUESTING POSITIONS THERE ISN'T EVEN TIME TO INTERVIEW THEM ALL

WHAT A GOOD IDEA!

YOU MEAN AN IMPERIAL TOURNA-MENT?

THEY ARE TO USE REAL SWORDS.

AND SO, OYAJI-SAMA,

WILL YOU ALSO COMPETE?

I WOULD LIKE THEM TO SERVE AS A MODEL FOR THE OTHERS.

I SHALL INVITE ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE MIGHTY DATE CLAN TO ENTER THE COMPETITION.

THE HEART OF MASAMUNE, THE ONE-EYED DRAGON, POUNDED.

BUT THIS WAS NO MERE SMALL TALK ABOUT AN IMPERIAL TOURNA-MENT.

NOT ONLY WAS HE SITTING FACE TO FACE WITH ONE OF SUCH HIGH RANK AS THE SURUGA DAINAGON.

"A SUITABLE DAY MUST MEAN THE ANNIVERSARY OF NOBUNAGA'S DEATH

AND "A TOURNAMENT WITH REAL SWORDS" ACTS THAT SOUL WILL LEAD AN UPRISING AGAINST

HE MUST BE ASKING IF I WILL PLEDGE,

THE ARMY OF SENDAI OF 620,000 KOKU!

IN MASA-MUNE'S EYES,

TADANAGA'S FACE BECAME OVERLAID WITH THAT OF THE DEMON KING NOBUNAGA.



IN THE WARRING STATES PERIOD, HIS WILD SPIRIT HAD BEEN WHOLLY CLAMPED DOWN BY HIDEYOSHI AND IEYASU.

LIKE A SPARK, THOSE BURIED DREAMS SMOLDERED IN MASAMUNE'S BREAST.

WELL?

OH?

DAINAGON-DONO,

WE HAVE LATELY RECEIVED IN SENDAI PRACTICE SWORD CALLED "HIKIHADA" FROM EDO.

TADAMUNE* AND HIS FOLLOWERS DEVOTE THEMSELVES TO PRACTICING WITH IT.

*Masamune's heir

I WONDER IF THERE IS EVEN ONE AMONG THEM.

WHO KNOWS HOW TO HANDLE A REAL SWORD

YOU ARE TOO MODEST

HOW-EVER,

SHALL HASTEN TO PARTICIPATE AS A LONE RONIN.

I, MASAMUNE, ALONE,

You may say I am old, but this am

0

IT WAS MADE OF WOOD









MOURI SHOUSHOU-DONO AS WELL IS CONSUMED WITH TERROR OF THE SHOGUN IN HIS HEART AND SOUL.

THE MAEDA CHUUNAGON IS ALSO A SURPRISING COWARD.

GOKAGE SHIZUMA

WHILE LISTENING TO THE REPORTS OF HIS SECRET AGENTS WHO HAD BEEN SENT TO EDO,

THE SPOILED CHILD'S EYES HELD AN ABNORMAL, DREADFUL LOOK

SIGISM NORTHMAN OF IZE

THEY CALLED ON THOSE NEWBERS OF THE CLAN WHO ALREADY HAD LONG-STANDING GRUDGES BETWEEN THEM

AS WELL AS THOSE WHO WERE SUSPECTED OF HAVING THE ATTENDANT TO CARRY OUT VENDEANCE KILLINGS

AND BRINGING THEM ALL TOGETHER CHOSE THE COMBATANTS FOR THE TOURNAMENT FROM AMONG THEM

THE TWENTY SWORDSMEN.

WHO ENTERED THE IMPERIAL TOURNAMENT.

WOULD BE SACRIFICED TO CALM THE VIOLENT PASSIONS

OF THE DEMON KING.

CHAPTER 77
AUDIENCE

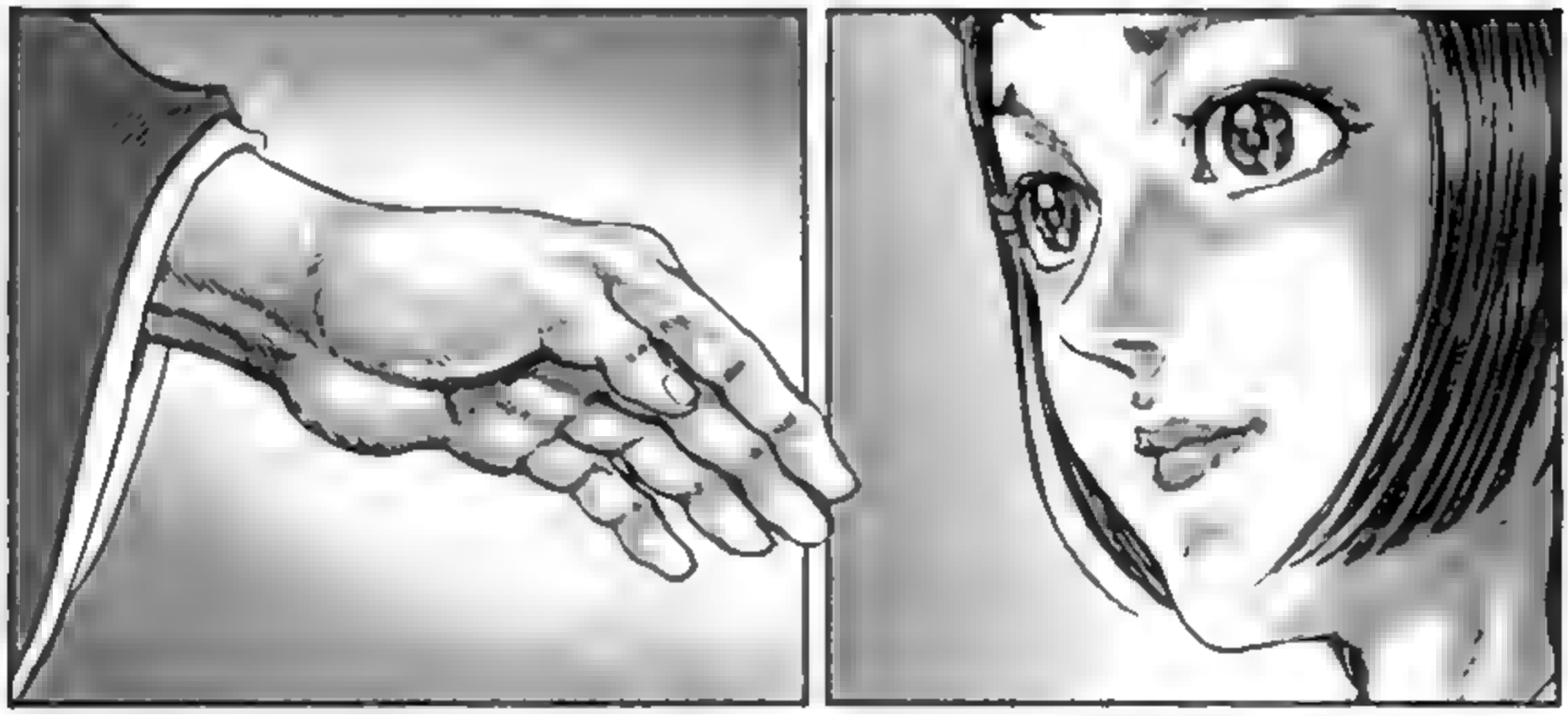


SIXTH YEAR
OF KAN'EI.
SEPTEMBER
20TH.

THUS ORDERED BY THE SURUGA DOMAIN.

AND HAVING BEEN GRANTED MONEY TO COVER THE PREPARATIONS AND A PASS TO THE CASTLE TOWN, GENNOSUKE ORDERED CEREMONIAL ROBES

YOU LOOK SPLENDID.









OH!

THE KATAGINU* SUITS YOU.

*Broad-shouldered sleeveless jacket worn only by samurai

THE TIGER IS FINELY ARRAYED!

SASAHARA-SAMA,

WE HAVE HEARD THAT THE SURUGA DAINAGON IS EXCEEDINGLY FEROCIOUS.

IS THAT SO?

YOU FLATTER ME, FUJIKI-DONO.

I WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR ADVICE.

I'M JUST A COUNTRY BUMPKIN.

IT IS A WORTHY MAN WHO IS AWARE OF HIS SHORT-COMINGS.

DO NOT BE ANXIOUS.

TADA-NAGA'S TEMPER WAS LIKE A NATURAL DISASTER.

IN REALITY,





SUNPU CASTLE WAS TWICE TAKEN BY OUR LATE LORD IEYASU.

BEAUTIFUL, ISN'T IT?

YOU HAVE BROTHER APPRENTICES?

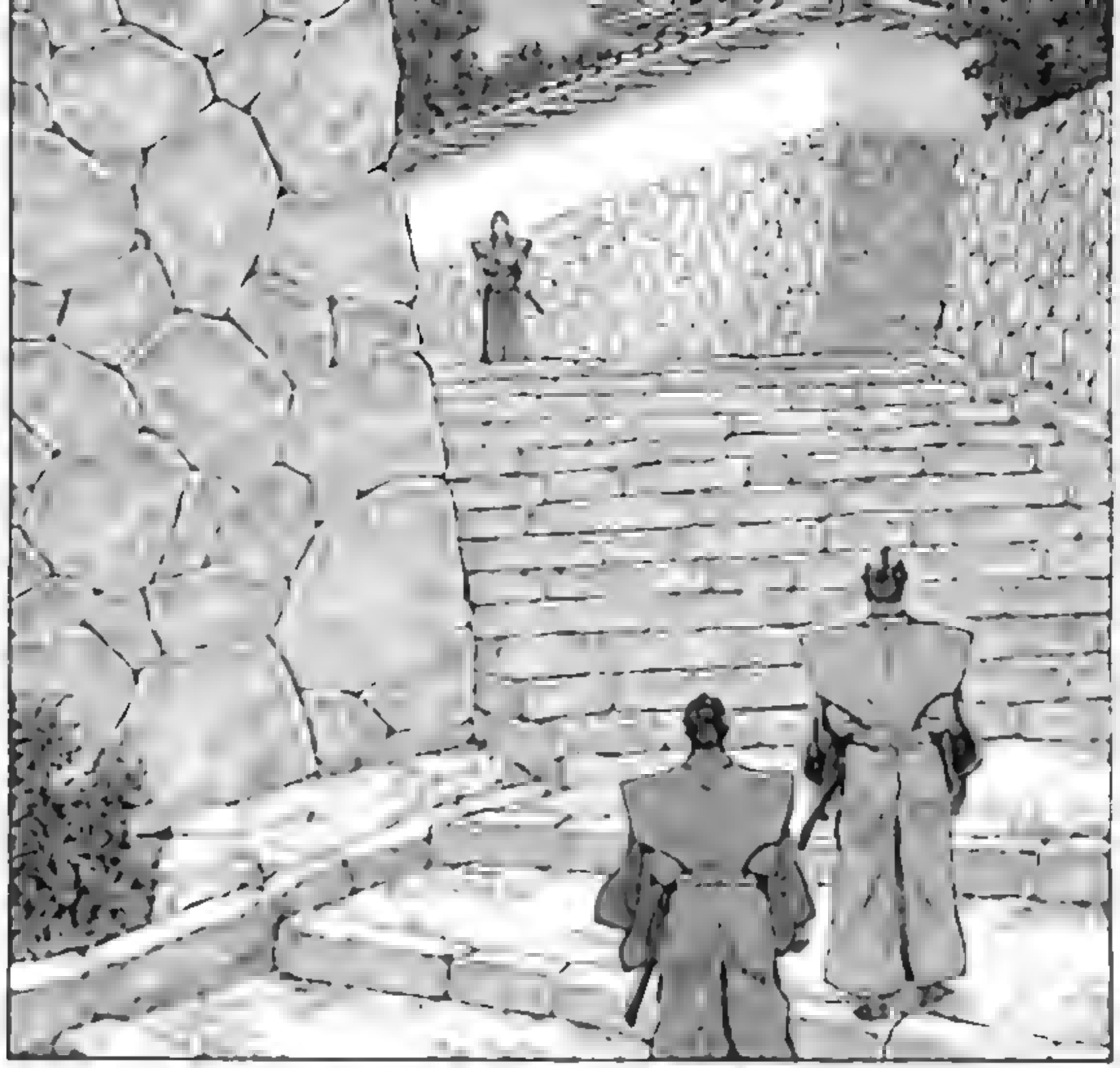
I WISH I COULD SHOW THIS TO MY ELDER BROTHER APPRENTICE.

Do you plan to end your life with those baby tigers?

Do you think Kogan-gyu has a future?

IT DOES!

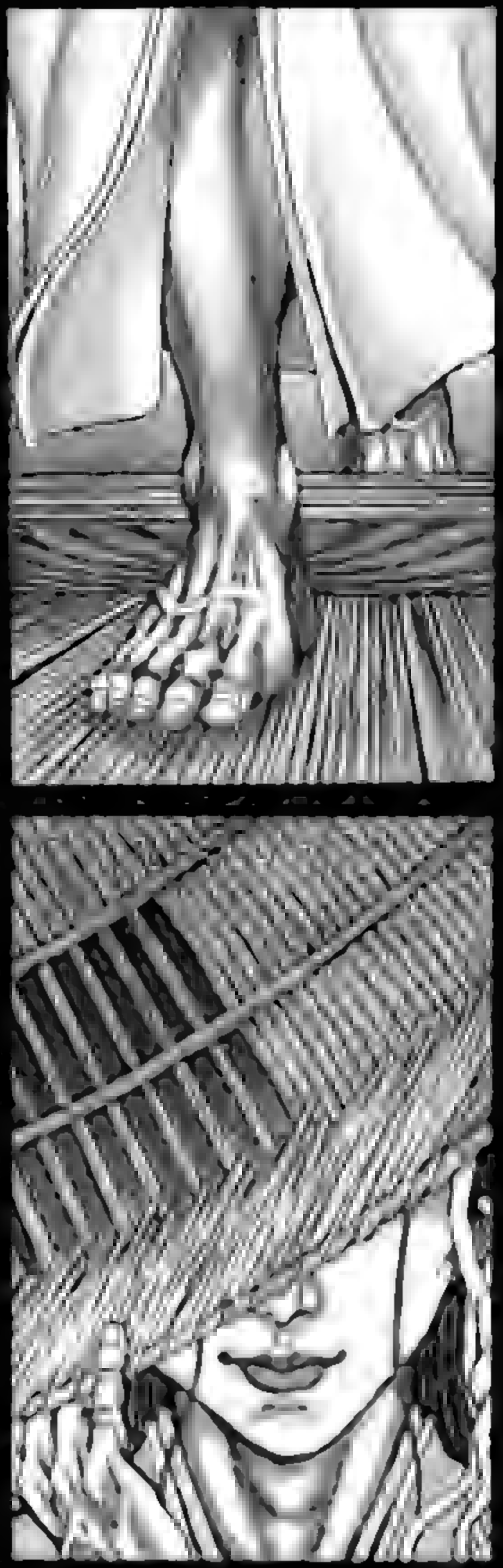
IT DOES HAVE A FUTURE!





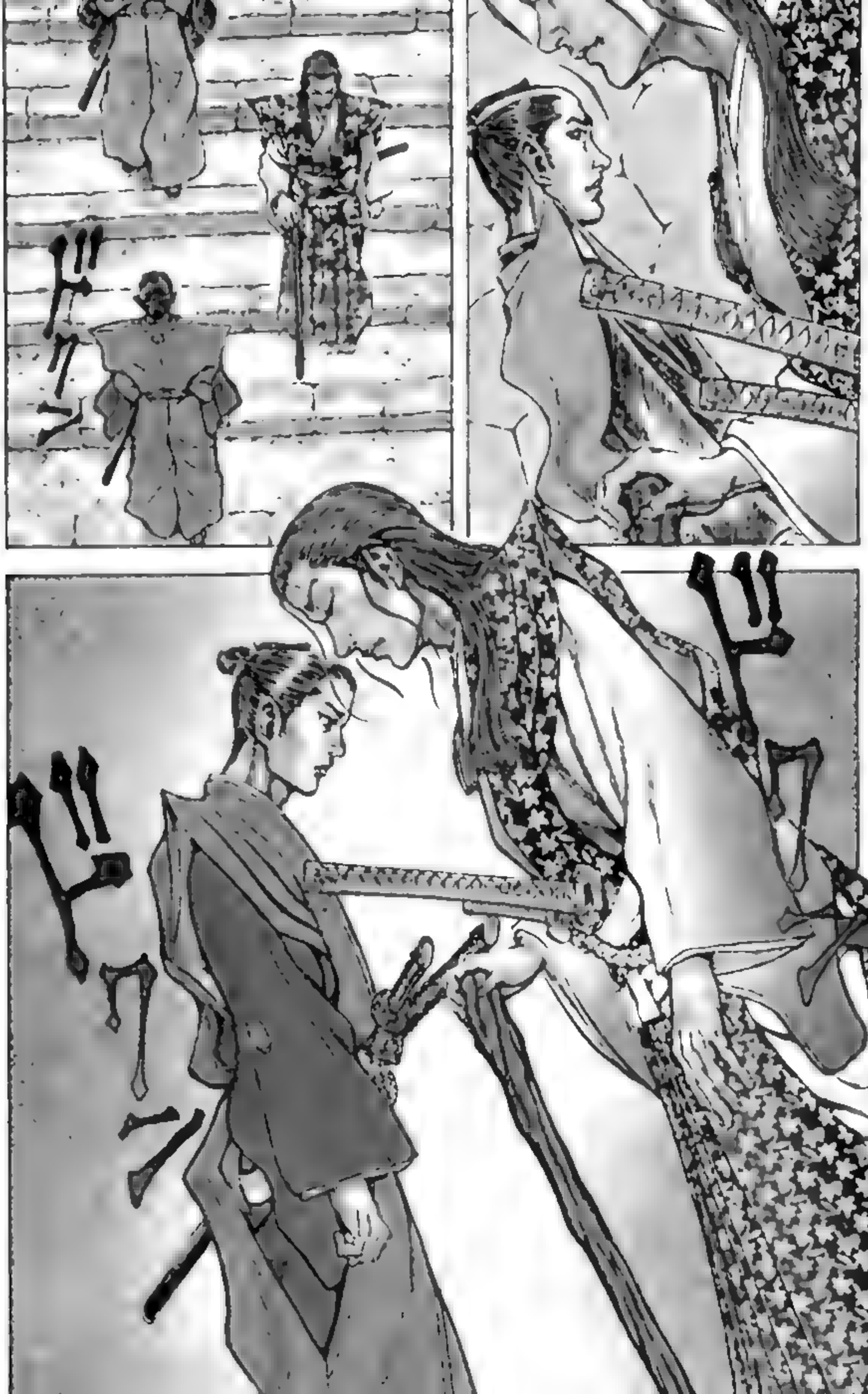








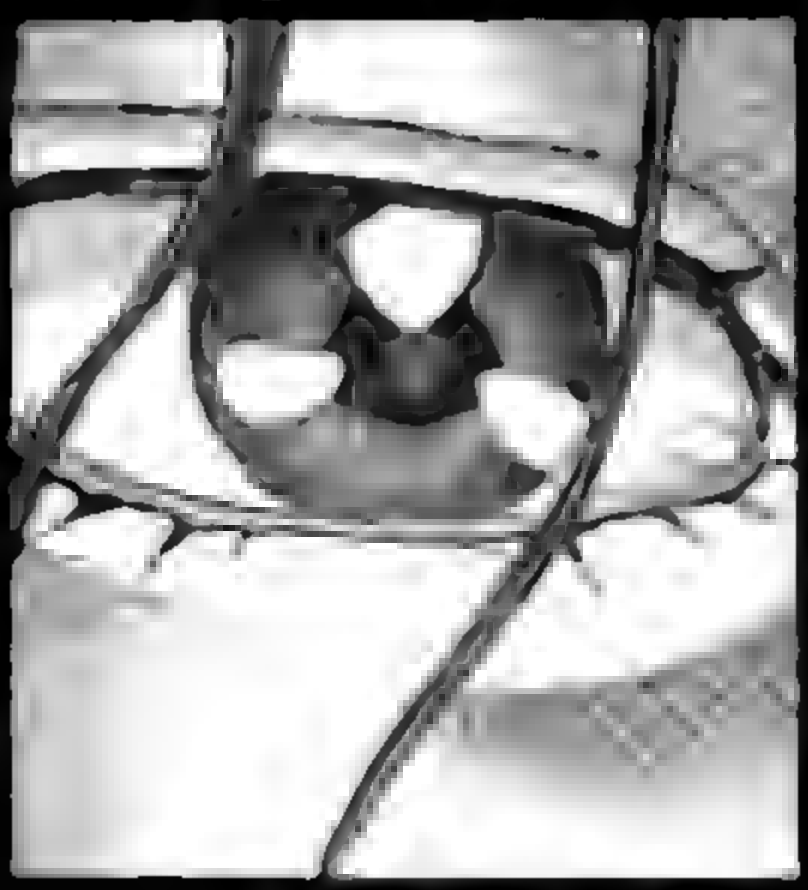






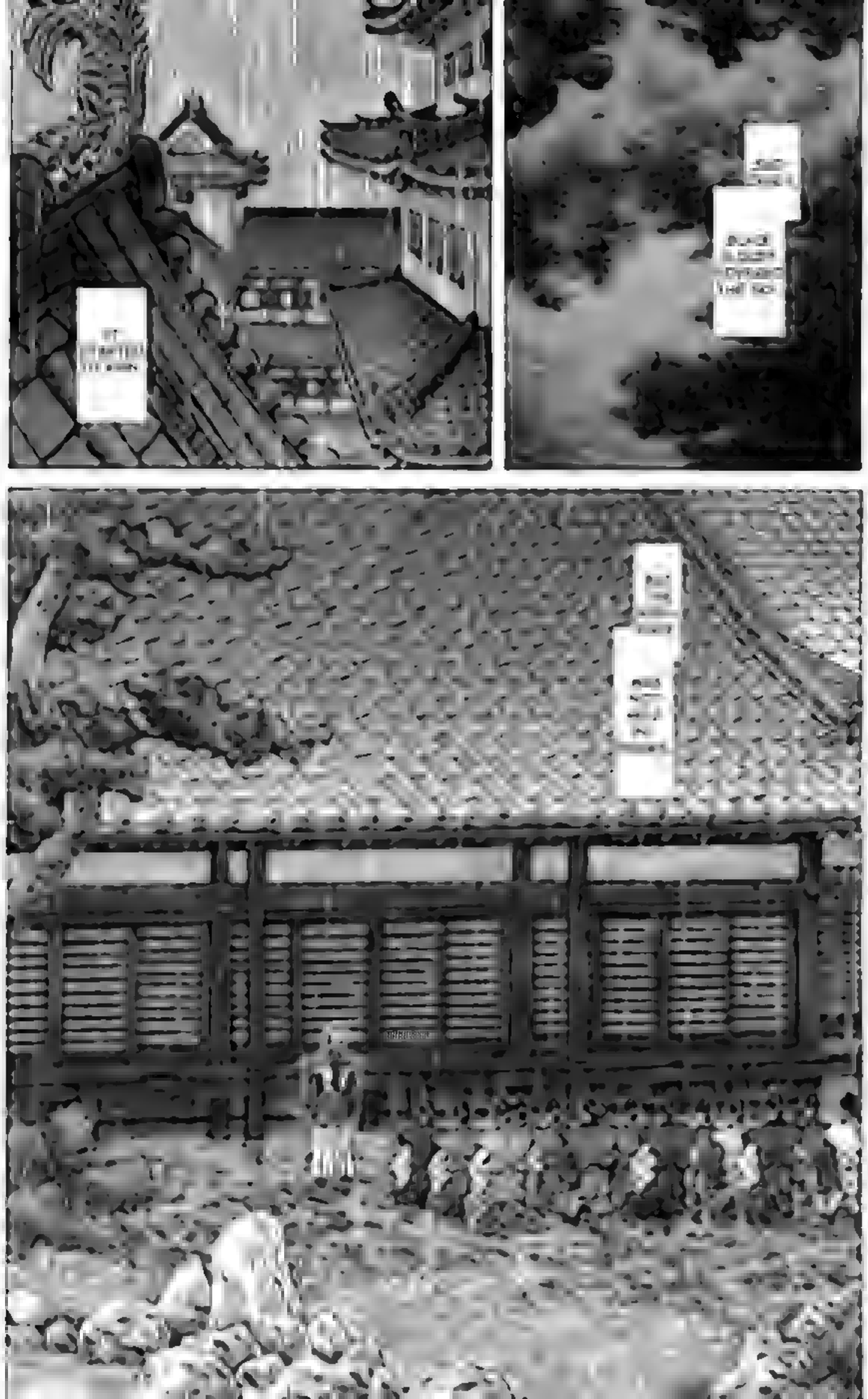














YOU MUST BOW DOWN WHILE AWAITING HIM.

OUR LORD WILL ARRIVE PRESENTLY.













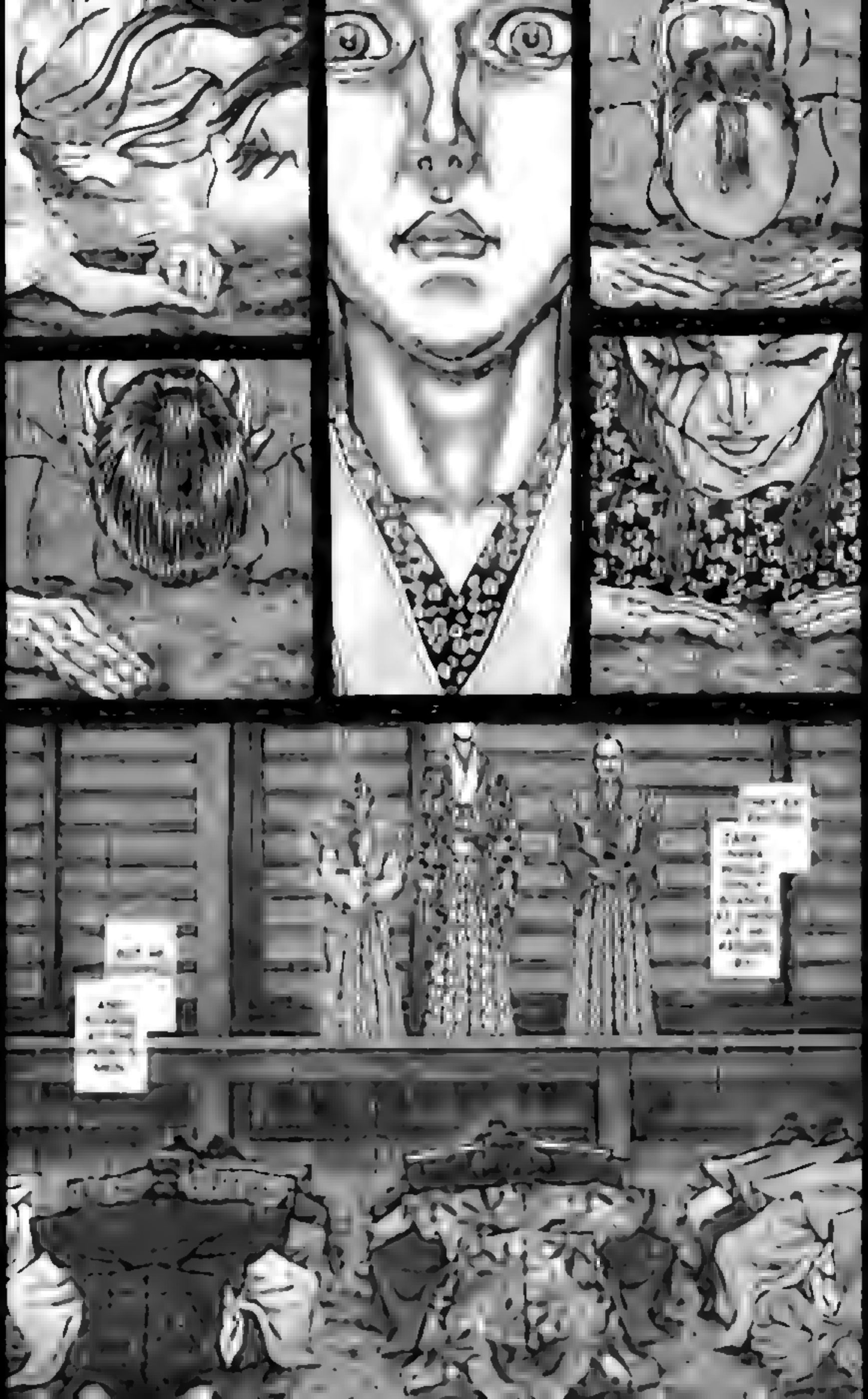


MY LORD,

THE PEOPLE WAITING IN THE GARDEN,

THE COMING SEPTEMBER 24TH...

THESE ARE THE MEN WHO WILL COMPETE IN THE TOURNAMENT.



THEY ALONE WILL BE ASKED TO OFFER THEIR


GARDEN.

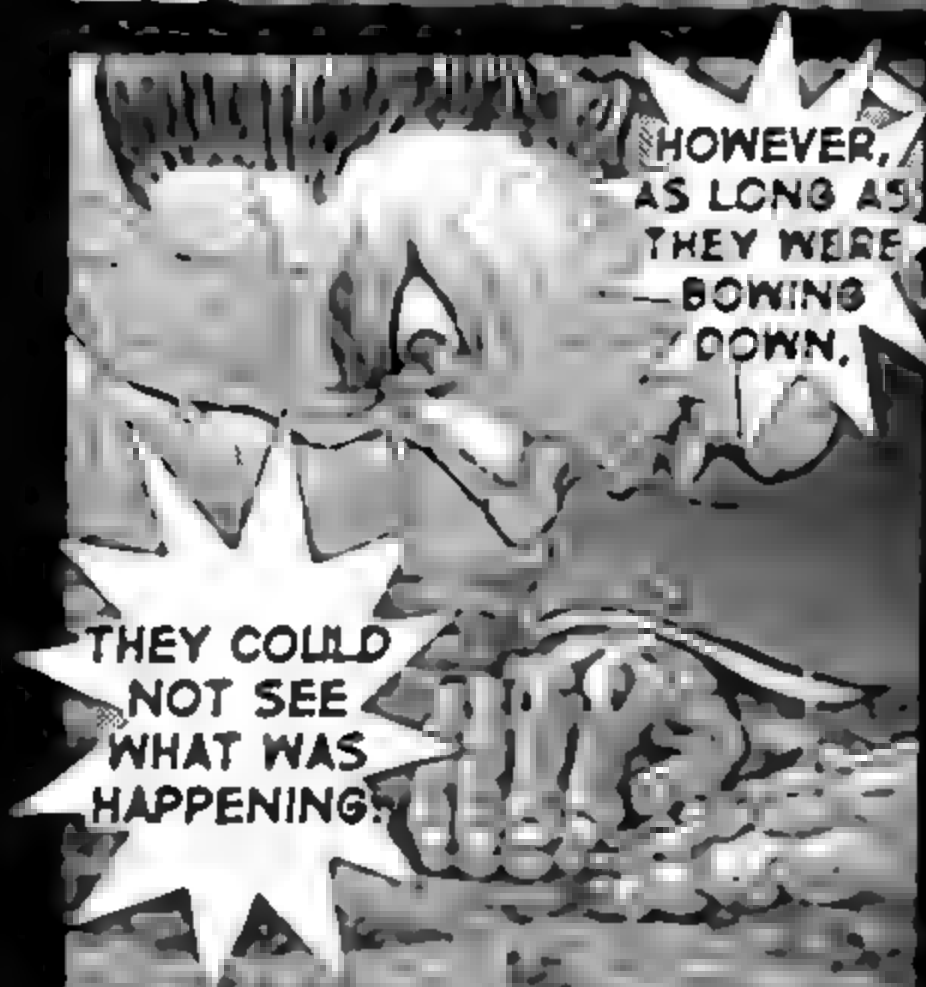









SUDDENLY, THE SCENT OF FRESH BLOOD REACHED THEIR NOSES.


THEY COULD NOT SEE WHAT WAS HAPPENING.


HOWEVER, AS LONG AS THEY WERE BOWING DOWN,
SOMEONE MUST HAVE BEEN KILLED!

OUR LORD HAS COMMITTED TE-UCHI!

IS THIS "TE-UCHI"*?

*The practice of a feudal lord personally executing a vassal who had insulted or betrayed him

WHAT FOR?

WHY?


Is that all...

FROM THE START, THE IMPERIAL TOURNAMENT USING REAL SWORDS WAS A PART OF HIS AMBITION TO SEIZE THE REALM.

WITHIN TADANAGA'S FANTASY,

WHEN HE TOPPLED THE SHOGUN IN EDO, A HUNDRED THOUSAND WARRIORS WOULD BOW BEFORE HIM.

THIS DAY,

THE FIRST BLOOD OF THE IMPERIAL TOURNAMENT WAS SHED.

"SHIGURÚI" Vol.14 ／END